A SURVEY OF MODERN PAINTING IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONTEMPORARY CALLIGRAPHIC SCHOOL.

by

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Abstract.

The first part of the thesis deals with the development of modern painting in the Islamic world according to Western concepts and styles. It traces the inception of Western aesthetics from the 19th century onwards and touches on the political, social and economic determinants that aided their introduction in the following countries: Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Iran, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Sudan, and the Arabian Peninsula.

The second part of the thesis analyzes the movements which sought to establish a modern art style in the Islamic world that would confirm a national artistic identity. It follows the different art movements which undertook this quest that eventually led to the development of the contemporary Calligraphic School of Art. It discloses the factors and artists which induced its inception. It establishes the main styles and various branches of the modern Calligraphic School of Art, including in-depth analysis and critique of each style, sub-style and its adherents. The placement of the Calligraphic School within the scope of international art is also mooted. The thesis ends by establishing a continuity between traditional Islamic art and the contemporary calligraphic school of art in the Islamic world.

Contents

Foreword.

There are a number of publications on contemporary art in the Islamic world, available today However, rarely do any contain an analytical study of modern art. This thesis attempts to close the gap and establish a continuity between the artistic past and the present in countries of the Middle East and North Africa. I would like to thank Professor Geza Fehervari for urging me to write on contemporary instead of classical Islamic art.

I have been extremely privileged and lucky to have Dr. Geoffrey King as my advisor. His sound advice, patience, and humor have been instrumental in guiding me and supporting my work and watching over its progress with care. To him goes my sincere and heartfelt gratitude.

So too am I indebted to my daughter Nafa'a who patiently taught me to use the word processor, about which I knew nothing at the outset. She was the reader of my thesis and her advice and humorous remarks have made my toil all the bearable. She also helped me arrange and print my illustrations. I am also grateful to my husband Ali, my daughters Rajwa and Basma, and my son Abbas (who was also of great help in arranging the illustrations) for their support and encouragement throughout the last four years. Every time I was about to give up, one of them would urge me to continue, giving me the confidence I needed. I thank my nephew, Zeid bin Raad, for his kindness and assistance during the last difficult weeks.

The sections on Morocco and Algeria could not have been written without the assistance of Mrs. Norma Talhouni who sent me the latest publications on Moroccan art, Ms. Aisha Haddad who took the time to answer my questions on Algerian modern art and sent me relevant references,

and Dr. Leila Bisharat and Mr. Said Azma who went out of their way to transmit my queries to Algeria and back through the Unicef offices. Suhail Bisharat has been most cooperative in relieving me of my responsibilities at the Royal Society of Fine Arts and providing the information I needed from the Jordan National Gallery, especially during the last three months before the completion of my thesis. To all of them goes my sincere gratitude. I am also indebted to Dr. Abdulla Toukan for his assistance in printing my illustrations.

Last but not least I am most grateful to my dear friend Leila Shawa for her continuous support and supervision over the binding of the thesis in London.

Finally, I owe a debt to all those whom I interviewed and whose cooperation was of great help to me.

Preface.

In this thesis, the names of Arabic and Iranian artists and personalities are written according to the way their owners spell them, while all Turkish names are spelled according to the modern Turkish alphabet. In writing the names of cities and towns, I have kept them the way they are most commonly written. All transliteration of Arabic words has been done according to the Encyclopaedia of Islam (new edition).

Because of the scarcity of written sources on contemporary Islamic art, only the following two sources need abbreviation:

Art and the Islamic World = AIW.

Al-ḥawlīyat al-atharīyah al-ʿarabīyah al-sūrīya = HAAS.

To my sovereign, cousin and precious friend - Al Hussein bin Talal.

Chapter I.

Introduction.

> "There is no modern Islamic art. The artistic expressions of contemporary Islamic artists are all Western-oriented and have no relationship to their cultural heritage. Unfortunately, Islamic artists of the 20th century have totally surrendered to Western aesthetics, losing any identity that could distinguish their work from others."
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> Prof. Dr. Nasser Al-Din Al-Assad, President of the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilization Research - Al al-Bait Foundation.

Modern Islamic art is an enigma that carries ambiguous connotations. On the one hand the term "modern" conjures a progressive, up-to-date condition. On the other hand, the term "Islamic" carries a traditional religious cognition, more relevant to the past than the present. Finally, the word "art" can mean anything from high monumental architecture to cartoon drawings. Therefore, taken at face value, the observation by Dr. Al-Assad might appear to be correct. However, upon analyzing modern Islamic art, it can be proved a fallacy. As a contemporary Islamic artist, my identity is constantly being questioned, both in the in the Islamic world and in the West. This issue of identity and the tentative position of Islamic art in the modern period were the main reasons for choosing the subject of this thesis.

By the mid-16th century, there were broadly two centres of Islamic civilization, the Ottoman and Safavid States. However, there was a clear disparity in the cultural and artistic development of the different parts in the Islamic world. As Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Tunisia fell within the cultural

sphere of Istanbul, whatever originated in the Ottoman capital was soon emulated in Beirut, Damascus, Cairo and Tunis, be it in the field of architecture or the minor arts. In Iran, Islamic art continued to maintain vigour and innovativeness through the Safavid and the early Qajar periods. On the other hand, Iraq, Jordan, Sudan, Algeria and the Arabian Peninsula, due to their geographic location, remained far removed from the Ottoman sphere of influence. These areas were the backwaters of the Ottoman Empire and hardly contributed to the progress of Islamic art[1].

By the late 18th century, European art was manufactured specifically for the Middle Eastern market. Concurrently, the degree to which local élites visited Europe gradually increased. They admired what they encountered and returned home to emulate the West in their own countries. The infiltration of European culture and art work into the Islamic world increased as trade relations with Europe developed with the opening of missionary schools and convents, particularly in Lebanon, and with Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. By the 1850s, the fashion for Orientalism in Europe was reaching its peak, encouraging hundreds of adventurers, explorers, poets, artists, writers, and mere tourists to visit the East.

Meanwhile, in sharp contrast to the West's discovery of the Islamic East, by the end of the 19th century the Islamic world was at its lowest ebb and could not but act as a feeble recipient confronting a strong and powerful West. Politically, this process expressed itself in the Western colonization of Islamic lands, mainly by the French and the British, who ushered in their culture, and which superimposed itself on a much-weakened indigenous, Islamic art and cultural traditions.

[1]The Hijaz, which due to the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, always retained an important position in the world of Islam, nevertheless, it contributed nothing to the art of the great metropolitan centres of the Islamic world.

By the beginning of the 20th century, Europe had already revolutionized itself industrially, politically, and socially while the Islamic East began its race to "catch up" with the West. In great haste, the Muslim world spared no effort in pushing aside all that was perceived to hinder the replacement of human beings with machines, which included the minor Islamic arts and indigenous handicrafts. Eventually, both formal and informal patrons of Islamic art - the state, the ruling classes and the gentry - decreased. Gradually, the production of crafts declined to meet the needs of foreign tourists rather than the local élite. The economic reality by the turn of the century, had a younger generation work in better-paying factory jobs, instead of apprenticing in the ateliers of its elders. Quantity overtook quality as communities were transformed into consumer societies. Imitation and repetition replaced innovation and creativity, leading to careless workmanship and a repetitive debasement of art.

As a general observation, the more quickly a country became industrialized, the faster its traditional Islamic arts declined. Even in countries which lagged behind in their race to industrialize, where craftsmen continued to work in a traditional manner, the innovation, ingenuity and quality of Islamic arts greatly suffered. Whatever was produced simply repeated the old forms and styles. The bourgeoisie and nouveau riche who replaced the old aristocracy and élite acquired expensive items to flaunt their wealth. For them, Limoges porcelain, Murano crystal, and English silver were far more valuable than Iznik ceramics, Çeşme Bulbul glass or Iranian metalwork. In poor countries such as Morocco, work in pure silver was discontinued, to be replaced by silver-plated metal.

Indeed music was one of the few arts that remained unaffected by the West. In its classical Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Urdu variations, music

has maintained its original characteristics. Although it is not as popular as modern, Western-oriented music, it has managed to safeguard its purity against foreign influence.

In a similar manner, Arabic calligraphy is the only visual art form to have been rescued from degeneration. Because of its intimate relationship with the copying of the Qur'ān, it has succeeded in maintaining its original dignity, whereas the other arts of the book - miniature painting, bookbinding, and illumination - have witnessed a rapid deterioration that has led almost to their complete demise.

The decline of the Islamic arts was accompanied by the weakening of the political institutions, the decadence of the governing bodies, and the deterioration of the regional economy of the entire Islamic world. These phenomena were inter-related, and as the aesthetic and creative fibre of Islamic art weakened, it succumbed increasingly to Western art forms and styles which had already pervaded the Islamic world due to the West's political, economic, scientific and military superiority. Above all, the increase in the means of communications between Europe and the Islamic countries exposed the Islamic world to the West at an ever-growing rate.

However, the political, economic and social environment that caused the decline of traditional art in the Islamic world, also paved the way for the development of a modern Islamic art that encompassed Western aesthetics. From the mid-19th century, an artistic renaissance developed in the Middle East and North Africa which eventually led to the development of a new artistic evolution in the field of visual arts, especially painting. By the mid-20th century, nearly all of the countries in the Middle East and North Africa had modern art movements which reflected their cultural and artistic growth

through their art institutions, artistic activities, the growing number of artists and the level they have achieved in their work.

The first part of this thesis examines the factors that brought Western art concepts and teachings into the Islamic world and discuss the individual artists who where instrumental in this transfer. It attempts to analyze and, at times, to rationalize, the political, social and cultural factors that have influenced and continue to influence the arts in the various countries dealt with here.

This thesis starts with Turkey, because the Ottoman Empire ruled over the largest part of the Islamic world including all Arab countries, save for Morocco, and to this extent was extremely influential. Secondly, it was mainly through the Ottoman Empire that Western aesthetics infiltrated the Islamic Near and Middle East. The chapters on individual countries comprise a brief historical background, and probe into each country's artistic traditions, the circumstances that led to the inception of Western aesthetics, and the evolution of its art movement in the modern period, including the different periods and stages of development: i.e. the growth of the various noteworthy artistic trends, artistic societies, art education, and art patronage. To this is added a concise biographical and critical account of important pioneering modern Islamic artists who have been instrumental to their country's art movement. The countries included in Part One are the following: Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Iran, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Sudan and the states of the Arabian Peninsula. They are put in chronological order according to the point at which Western painting began to develop in each country. The early starters - Turkey, Egypt and Lebanon - brought about the creation of modern art in the Islamic world and

they are placed in this thesis in successive rings of cultural sophistication which move outwards to those countries that were encompassed last of all by modern art movements.

Part One of the thesis is the first comprehensive survey of the development of modern painting in the Islamic world. Few written and verbal sources appear to have been compiled, to give a clear picture of the state of modern Islamic art, from the 19th century down to the present. The little that has been written so far on modern Islamic art mainly narrates in chronological order its development, without analyzing the factors that have brought it about. Even these few sources were often contradictory, inadequate, exaggerated, or too general to have any academic value. I have used such few books as I could find on the history of modern art in the countries of the Middle East as well as information from exhibition catalogues, archive files, and periodicals. Whenever possible, I have interviewed artists, art historians and critics. Thereafter, I have verified what I found dubious by cross-checking with other sources. Sources on countries like Sudan for example, are so scarce and general that I found it easier to go there myself to gather first-hand information. Even then, I could not meet all the artists I wanted to because of the deteriorating political situation and the breakdown of internal communications. Some of the people I met were afraid to talk freely, while others gave me inaccurate facts instead of admitting their ignorance, and so I had to travel to London to interview Sudanese artists living there.

Part Two of the thesis, analyzes the three stages that many contemporary Islamic artists have gone through, regardless of whether their

respective countries had an early or a late start in adopting Western aesthetics. It also addresses the artistic identity crisis that modern Islamic artists experience, which has led to a quest for an original modern Islamic art. Three major artistic groups which have endeavored to base Western aesthetics in their local environments and the member-artists whose experiments developed those styles are also discussed. It determines the inception of the modern Calligraphic School of Art as a genuine contemporary Islamic art movement and cites the artists through whose experiments it was created and the subject matter that the Calligraphic School has dealt with. It categorizes, for the first time, the Calligraphic School of Art into three main styles, each with several branches. It also cites examples of artists who have been the main followers of each style and its sub-divisions, including a short biography and a critique of their work.[2]

The goal of the thesis is thus two-fold. The first aim is to trace the development of Western aesthetics and modern painting in the Islamic world. The second is to establish the continuity of Islamic art in the 20th century through the contemporary Calligraphic School of Art. The survey of Islamic countries and their evolution in painting, from their exposure to the West in the 19th century through the late 20th century, prepare the ground for the development which revitalized contemporary Islamic art, in the form of the modern School of Calligraphy.

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[2]So far, the only book that has been written on this subject is al-ḥurūfīya al-ʿarabīya, fann wa hawīyah (Arab letterism art and identity) by the Paris-based Lebanese journalist Shirbil Dagher. In the book, the author traces the origins of the use of Arabic letters in modern art and makes an attempt (as he terms it) at cataloguing the various 'school of letterism' according to their subjects.

Part I.

Chapter 2.

Turkey.

Ottoman artists and architects began borrowing isolated Western stylistic features as early as the 17th century. However, they did so within the framework of an Ottoman aesthetic which was dominant until the reign of Sultan Selim III (1789-1809). Istanbul, the centre of political power in one of the greatest empires on earth, was also its most important cultural metropolis. Artistic and architectural trends emanated from it and immediately spread throughout the Empire via a powerful guild system, organized under the strongly centralized regime of the time.[3] Many European artists visited the Ottoman court. Among the first was the Italian Gentile Bellini who painted a portrait of Sultan Mehmet II. He was followed by the Danish painter Melchior Lorck during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent (1520-1566). Another Danish painter, Johannes Lewenklaü, came to the court during the reign of Sultan Murat III (1574-1595). However, none of these artists left behind him a tradition or practice of Western oil painting among his local peers, nor were Turkish miniature painters and other artists acquainted with the great masters of the West.[4] By the early 19th century, European tastes had pervaded Turkey. The palace circle which in more than one way had always been in the vanguard, was inundated with Western fashions in architecture, clothing, bric-a-brac, jewelry and painting. Sultan Abdülmecit (1839-1861) had already built a large European-style pavilion-kiosk at Topkapi before moving to his new

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[3]M. Sözen, The Evolution of Turkish Art and Architecture, p.151.
[4]T. Ataöv, Turkish Painting, p.13.

Rococo creation the Dolmabahçe palace. The British Sir David Wilkie painted Sultan Abdülmecit's portrait in 1840.[5]

When Sultan Abdülaziz (1861-1876) visited Europe, he became the first Ottoman ruler to cross his borders for a purpose other than war. During his visit, he acquired firsthand knowledge of European art. Upon his return, Western-inspired institutions began to replace traditional ones. For example, after the conquest of Istanbul by Sultan Mehmet II, all crafts were organized in a comprehensive guild system under the Imperial Architect's Lodge (Hassa Mimarlar Oçağı). It had regulated construction throughout the empire, and included in its membership architects and artisans of various ranks such as mason-architects, minaret masters, marble and stone workers, stucco masters, carpenters and ornamentors (carvers and tracerers), as well as plasterers, drainage experts, and metal, glass and lead artists. In the mid-19th century, the Lodge was replaced by a Royal Administrative Bureau (Ebniye-i Hassa Müdürlüğü). It was followed by Western-style schools of architecture and fine arts that effectively superseded the ancient guild system and palace schools where the first selection of potential skills for all the major crafts used to be made.[6]

During the second half of the 19th century, European architects, artists and craftsmen were imported to teach their local counterparts. Sultan Abdülaziz invited European artists such as Guillemet, Amadeo Preziosi, Chlebowski, and Stanislas von Aivazowski to his court. The Sultan encouraged Guillemet to open an art academy, which he did in 1874 in Pera in Istanbul. It was a futile venture, however, because its small group of students were mostly non-Muslim residents of the city. Sultan Abdülaziz

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[5]M. Levey, The World of Ottoman Art, pp.135-6.
[6]Sözen, Op.cit., p.320.

also acquired a collection of paintings by 19th-century Orientalists including Jean-Léon Gérôme, Louis Boulanger and Eugène Fromentin as well as several sculptures to display in the Dolmabahçe Palace. What was probably the first painting exhibition in the Islamic world took place in the Ottoman capital in 1874 under the patronage of the Sultan.[7] This transition marked a rapid and visible decline of traditional Islamic art in the empire.

Mural Painting.

In spite of the increasing infusion of Western features into Turkish miniature painting, the shift to Western styles did not occur suddenly. It was difficult for the Turks to accept a foreign concept of art derived through political and economic relations. The adaptation began in the 18th and 19th centuries during a transitional period and was first apparent in wall paintings of landscapes and still-lifes saturated with European elements. Yet it was not until the second half of the 19th century that easel painting was introduced.[8]

With the introduction of the printing press in 1729, the demand for hand-written books sharply diminished, thus decreasing the production of miniatures. At this stage, it was only natural for a new genre of painting to develop. The new form of mural painting began to replace miniatures. In the second half of the 18th century, Baroque and Rococo styles that had been popular in European architecture during the 17th and 18th centuries started to pervade Turkey. With these new influences on Ottoman architecture, mural painting was introduced into Turkey. These new paintings were not executed in the Western fresco technique but were a type of fresco a secco, produced

[7]G.Renda, "Modern Trends in Turkish Painting", Transformation of Turkish Culture, pp.229-30, Renda, "Traditional Turkish Painting and the Beginning of Western Trends", A History of Turkish Painting, p.77.
[8]Renda, "Modern Trends in Turkish Painting", Op.cit., p.229.

by the application of pigments of root dyes mixed with gum or water over dry plaster. In fact, this was the same technique used in traditional Ottoman wall decoration known as kalem isi (painted brushwork tracery). However, this new genre had a different language. The stylized floral and geometric decorative motifs of traditional Ottoman wall-paintings were replaced by Western Baroque and Rococo ornamental patterns that included landscapes, and still-lifes of flowers, fruit pots and baskets. Yet unlike their Western archetype, Turkish murals were totally devoid of human figures. Artists only started including human figuration in their mural compositions in the late 19th century. Thus, this new form of painting was adapted to local interpretations. However, wall decorations consisting mainly of scenic murals played a significant role in the development of Turkish pictorial art.[9]

The earliest mural paintings in the Rococo style first appeared in the harem section of Topkapi Palace during the Tulip Period in the first quarter of the 18th century. The murals consisted of narrow friezes filled with rows of flower bouquets and fruit bowls, either painted or carved on walls. They later included pictures of kiosks and other architectural elements as well as trees and fountains. Gradually these friezes expanded in size and developed into panoramic views of Istanbul. They were placed within niches or upper portions of walls and surrounded by various types of decorative frames.[10]

Besides the absence of human figures in these paintings, the careful depiction of buildings added some documentary value to them. The application of colour, however, was not realistic and for the first time Western-style perspective, though primitively achieved, was introduced as artists had already begun experimenting with light and shade. In spite of

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[9]G.Renda, "Traditional Turkish Painting", Op.cit., pp.69-70.
[10]Ibid, pp.70-2.

these new conventions, the detail-oriented tradition of miniatures continued to prevail in all mural paintings.[11]

This new genre of painting soon spread outside the palace walls to private mansions and buildings in Istanbul. The same stylistic features were imitated which indicates that there was a community of mural painters practicing outside the palace. Standardized models existed and helped artists adopt Western painting techniques. Most of these murals resembled one another, repeating the same visual vocabulary - red-roofed and windowed houses, fountains, bridges, pale trees, and pink skies. Thus, they give proof of stereotyped motifs. Specifically, Western elements such as perspective and light and shade, indirectly introduced to Turkish art, were applied mostly by copying (fig. 1).[12]

In the second half of the 19th century, oil-painting was introduced into Turkey and artists began applying it to pictorial murals. Although the most popular subject matter continued to be Istanbul and its various quarters, certain new themes were introduced: country scenes incorporating towers and castles similar to those in European postcard illustrations; hunting representations; exotic views with palm trees; and monuments from the Arab provinces. Human figures only began to appear toward the end of the 19th century. Meanwhile, the still-life became an inseparable component of mural painting. Vases and baskets filled with flowers, fruit cups and watermelons pierced with knives, executed in Western fashion, were featured in many buildings (fig. 2). Günsel Renda believes that it was possible for European masters like Aivazowski, Preziosi and Chlebowski who had been invited to Istanbul by Sultan Abdülaziz in the second half of the 19th century, to have

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[11] Ibid, pp.72-3.
[12] Ibid, pp.73-5.

worked on murals of this period. She speculates that mural paintings of purely European nature would have been executed first by a foreign artist, forming the prototype to be copied and adopted by local painters. Renda thinks that the presence of the foreign artists accounts for the presence of European-style buildings in mural painting and the type of Islamic architecture popular among European Orientalist painters of the 19th century.[13] Had this been the case, one might have expected at least some of the original murals to still exist. They would have been signed by the artists, making them easy to identify. It seems unlikely that all of the originals were destroyed, especially if they were kept in palaces. Furthermore, murals copied from European models by Turkish painters should have had a better interpretation of light and shade and a more accurate adherence to rules of perspective and anatomy, if indeed they were as dependent on Western models as Renda suggests.

During the 19th century, mural painting spread from Istanbul to other parts of Turkey, including Anatolia and Rumelia, and wall paintings reached the distant provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Houses in Aleppo, Damascus, Baghdad and Cairo as well as in Bulgaria and Albania still retain examples of European-influenced Turkish mural painting, as do some mosques. The themes changed according to the region, although, topographic representations of Istanbul and views of Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem were popular throughout the Empire.[14]

At a different level, the influence of lithography and printing made itself felt. Two French brothers, Jacques and Henri Caillol travelled to

[13]Ibid, pp.75-7.
[14]Ibid, pp.79-81.

Istanbul in 1831 at the invitation of Mehmet Hüsrev Pasa. They founded the first lithography workshop, bringing their materials and equipment with them from France. Countless educational and administrative books filled with pictures and drawings were printed in this establishment. In 1836, it was closed down after Hüsrev Pasa fell from office, but the Caillol Brothers opened a private lithographic workshop and others followed their example in the ensuing years. The technique of lithography was first put to use in illustrating books and pamphlets printed for the army. They illustrated men, weapons, maps and charts. Later, it was used to print popular books with pictures.[15]

Coffee-house Pictures.

In later decades, prints known as 'coffee-house pictures' became popular. They consisted of coloured lithographs that displayed a variety of subjects depending on the interest of the public at the time. They included religious themes, sultans, national and folk heroes, pictures of warships and important events such as the opening of the Suez Canal (1869), the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), and the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1922). After the Republic was established in 1923, there were various portrayals of Kemal Atatürk made by painters attached to printing houses. The sizes of the prints varied between 35x50cm and 57x82cm, depending on the size of the stone or zinc plate. They were generally made by obscure craftsmen or folk artists to hang as decoration, alongside printed calligraphic works in coffee-houses, work places and private homes. It was a long-established custom to decorate coffee-houses with mural paintings but after the introduction of lithography, hanging pictures on the wall supplanted the older custom, and continued in

[15]M.Asher, "The Art of the Print in Turkey", A History of Turkish Painting, p.421.

the 1950.[16] The low cost of printing such reproductions doubtless had the effect of popularizing coffee-house pictures.

Soldier-painters.

From the 18th century onwards, a new pictorial art emerged in Turkey. It by-passed the figural representation familiar in Turkish miniatures, to manifest itself first in mural-painting, painted cupboard doors and later in free-standing easel paintings. This new pictorial art adhered to the trends of Baroque architecture and eventually led to landscape painting.[17] The first easel painters were trained in the Military and Naval Engineering Schools of the Ottoman army such as Darüşşafaka where drawing and perspective courses were part of the topography curriculum. The Ottoman government believed that to restore the former power of the Empire, army officers had to be trained according to Western methods and procedures. The first military training institution was the Imperial Land Engineering School (Muhendishane-i Berri-i Humayun) founded in 1793 by Sultan Selim III. It was followed by the Imperial School of Military Sciences (Mekteb-i Ulumu Harbiye-i Şahane) in 1834. Both schools taught painting to enable young cadets to produce topographic layouts and technical drawings for military purposes, and their art training included the techniques of mapping, engraving and carving. Thus, the teaching of art started in military schools before civilian institutions, a training which led to the phenomenon of soldier-painters, probably unique in the history of painting.[18]

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[16]Ibid, pp.421-2

[17]T.Erol, "Painting in Turkey in the Nineteenth Century and Early Twentieth Century", A History of Turkish Painting, p.94.

[18]Ibid, pp.91-2.

The topographical and technical training of the soldier-painters maintained an interest in nature, emphasized the outdoors, and assigned a special importance to perspective. Their linear representation (resim-i hatti) or scenic views (menazir) involved the study of nature and topography and excluded the human figure from the composition. It might even be argued that the soldier-painters, who were bound to each other in terms of their hierarchical links, replaced the old court miniature painters.[19] Those with talent and interest continued to paint after their graduation at military schools and formed the nucleus of Turkey's early, Western-trained artists. Some were sent to Europe by the Sultan to further their education and art training, and upon their return were attached to the Ottoman Court. There was no difference in the work of soldier-painters trained abroad and those schooled in Turkey. All demonstrated the same unsophisticated view of the world as well as a shy and respectful attitude in dealing with their art and emphasized detailed workmanship in their early works. Those who remained in Turkey were classified by Turkish writers as 'primitive'.[20] Their works resembled the mural paintings of the same period. A number of soldier-painters served as field officers, though most worked as painting instructors in the various levels of military schools. Others became aides-de-camp to the Sultan or designers in the Yildiz Palace tile and porcelain workshops.[21]

Among the first soldier-painters to go abroad were two graduates: Ahmet Ali Efendi (later known as Şeker Ahmet Paşa) who was assistant instructor of painting in the Military Medical High-School, and Süleyman Seyyit who was stationed in the Military Academy. They were sent by

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[19]Ibid, p.96.
[20]Ibid, p.94.
[21]Ibid, p.107.

Sultan Abdülaziz to the Académie des Beaux Arts in Paris, to continue their art training and to be trained as educators, in order to teach in the military schools upon their return.

Photography.

In 1867, Sultan Abdülaziz appointed a photographer to his court,[22] and photography soon gained popularity and played a role in the teaching of painting in military schools and Darussafaka where lessons were based on painting from prints and photographs. Considering the basic level of the photographic technology of the time and the quality of photographs, the clarity, transparency and sensitivity of the colours depicted in 19th century Turkish paintings was the product of the artist's skill, talent and training rather than photographic aid. The primitive painters wanted to copy nature down to the last detail, whether through direct observation or from photographs. This was coupled with the discipline of the training those painters had received, which made all their works resemble each other.[23]

The first Ottoman photographers were Christians who chose models from their own communities. The earliest were Armenians and Greeks and they introduced photography into Turkey and the Levant.[24] Muslims and Jews living in the Ottoman Empire opposed photography when it was first introduced. To them, photography was the exact reproduction of the human image which they considered against the teachings of their respective religions. Through the encouragement of the sultans, this attitude gradually changed. Abdülhamit II, who was himself a photographer, had photographs taken of every event and place in the Empire, including all the naval ships,

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[22]Mansel, Sultans in Splendour, p.11.
[23]Erol, Op.cit.,p.104.
[24]Çizgen, Photography in the Ottoman Empire 1839-11919, pp.15-6.

military installations, and buildings erected by the state such as schools, police stations, mosques and archaeological sites, as well as ethnographic and natural scenes. The albums were deposited in the Yildiz Palace library.[25] Sultan Abdülmecit was the first ruler to present decorations to photographers. In 1910, Rahmizade Bahaeddin became one of the first Muslims to open a photographic studio in Istanbul. [26]

Early Western Oriented Painters.

A Turkish, Western-style painting took off with Ferik Ibrahim Paşa (1815-1889), Ferik Tevfik Paşa (1819-1866), and Hüsnü Yusuf Bey (1817-1861) who were among the first soldier-painters. However, because none of their works has survived, it is difficult to evaluate their art and pass judgement on them as artists. Unfortunately, many of the early works that have reached us are unsigned and impossible to identify.[27]

The first generation of Western-oriented painters included Osman Nuri, Salih Molla Aşki, Hüseyn Giritli, Ahmet Bedri, Servili Ahmet Emin, Ahmet Ragip, Biçakçilar Gedikpaşali, and Çemal Kasimpaşali. No records exist on this group of artists who are only known by their signatures. They painted behind the walls of the Ottoman palaces, thus avoiding the disapproval of reactionaries. Their subject matter was thus restricted to the palaces with their well kept flower beds, decorated kiosks, still ponds, and gushing fountains. In spite of their large canvases and oil paint, the thoroughness of miniature painting tradition was still evident in their work,[28]

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[25]Ibid, pp.22-3.
[26]Ibid, pp.14-5.
[27]Erol, Op.cit. p.105.
[28]Ataöv, Op.cit., p.13.

and their cultural and artistic heritage persisted in spite of their Western orientation (fig. 3).

The most prominent artist among the second generation was Şeker Ahmet Paşa (1841-1906). He laid the foundation for Western-style Turkish painting with his semi-muted canvases of forests, animals and still-lifes. He was nicknamed Sugar (şeker) because of his gentleness and mild disposition. Sultan Abdülaziz sent him to Paris where he studied for almost eight years under Louis Boulanger and Jean-Léon Gérôme. He developed a taste for Millet, Courbet and the painters of the Barbizon School.[29] He then spent one year in Rome before returning to Istanbul where he was appointed art instructor at the Military Academy. Though not a military man, Şeker Ahmet Paşa was shortly promoted to the rank of general and became Master of Ceremonies, teşrifat naziri, at the Imperial Court, where his duty was to acquire paintings for the palace. By the time of his death in 1906, he was occupying the high post of Intendant of the Palace, saray naziri. In 1873[30] and 1875 he organized what were probably the first two group exhibitions in the Islamic world. Although he had studied for years with the academic masters of the time in Paris, there is no trace of academicism or even a hint of official art in his works which followed a personal style that betrayed a certain simplicity and naïvité (fig. 4).[31]

Süleyman Seyyit (1842-1913) was another soldier-painter who was sent to Paris. He attended the École des Beaux-Arts and regularly visited the studios of Robert Fluori and Gustave Boulanger. After nine years in Paris

[29]Ibid, pp.14-15, Erol, Op.cit., p.105.
[30]G. Renda gives 1874 as the date of the first exhibition.
[31]Erol, Op.cit., pp.111-13.

and one year in Rome, he returned to Istanbul to take up teaching. Seyyit was the first instructor to take his students outdoors to draw from nature. He also contributed to two newspapers and was an advocate of free speech, which caused the authorities to ignore him while most of his colleagues were promoted to higher ranks. Seyyit's promotion to the rank of major came after one of his still-life paintings was shown to the sultan. Though he painted portraits, none of them left his studio; he was known for his landscapes and still-lifes which were his best representations. He used unmixed paints in thin transparent layers that gave his uncluttered still-lifes a certain freshness and brightness. Süleyman Seyyit's skilled treatment of light and colour depicts a sensitivity and fond rapport with his subject matter (fig. 5).[32]

Though born two decades later, Hüseyin Zakâi Paşa (1860-1919) has always been treated and evaluated with Şeker Ahmet and Süleyman Seyyit. While a student at the Military Academy, one of his paintings was presented to Sultan Abdülhamit II (1842-1918) who was impressed by it. Subsequently, the Sultan promoted Zakâi to the rank of lieutenant and appointed him aide-de-camp. He was one of the few soldier-painters who served as a field officer. Zakâi Paşa never went to Europe to train, and judging by his early works he was considered a primitive painter. There was an unmistakable difference between these early works and those executed after 1910, when he came under the influence of the Impressionists, probably after studying the paintings of Şeker Ahmet Paşa and Süleyman Seyyit. Zakâi could have copied his early works from photographs, though his paintings show a clarity and unity unknown to photography.[33] Most of his

[32]Ataöv, Op.cit., pp.16-7, Erol, Op.cit., pp.113-14.
[33]Ataöv, Op.cit., p.16, Erol, Op.cit., pp.119-21.

work consisted of landscapes and still-lifes, that betray a keen eye for detail and light distribution.

The most famous Ottoman artist was Osman Hamdi Bey (1842-1910). Artist, archaeologist, architect, poet, writer, musician and curator, he was a remarkable multi-faceted person with great stamina and dedication. At the early age of fifteen, Hamdi left to Paris for twelve years where he worked in the ateliers of Gérôme and Boulanger and became totally Westernized in his views and painting technique. After returning to Istanbul, he founded the Imperial Ottoman Museum in 1881 and was its first director. Hamdi also drew up the founding regulations for the School of Fine Arts (Sanayi-i Nefis Mektebi) which opened under his directorship in 1883 and became the Academy of Fine Arts (Guzel Sanatlar Akademisi) after 1928.[34] Unlike Şeker Ahmet Paşa, Zakâi Paşa and Süleyman Seyyit (who kept his female portraits hidden in his studio), Osman Hamdi gained his reputation as the first Turkish artist to include human figures in his compositions. His portraits exuded an inner peace and tranquility which compensated for their inanimate appearance. Hamdi followed in the footsteps of the 19th-century European Orientalist painters by depicting minute architectural details and photographic images. In his multitude of large genre paintings, he rendered every material fold, floor crack, and decorative motif with meticulous precision. He was accordingly considered a noteworthy member of the Orientalist movement in European painting of the last century (fig. 6). A dynamic person, Hamdi was involved in various activities including international relations, archaeological excavations, as well as becoming the Director of the Archaeological Museum and the Academy of Fine Arts.[35]

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[34]L. Bisharat, "Turkey", Contemporary Art from the Islamic World, p.271 and Erol, Op.cit., p.94.
[35]Erol, Op.cit, pp.115-17.

Halife Abdülmecit Efendi (1868-1944), the last caliph of Islam (1922-1924), was an exceptionally talented painter of his time as well as a calligrapher and art patron. He trained with his artist friends in the palace (one of whom was Avni Lifij) and painted portraits, landscapes and scenes of the palace environment (fig. 7).[36] A highly cultured person, Abdülmecit Efendi held a literary salon in Dolmabahçe and all foreign visiting artists were invited to the palace. Among his foreign artist-friends was Aivazowski. In 1908, he founded the Ottoman Painters Society and was in close contact with members of the 1914-Generation group whom he used to invite quite often. While still a crown-prince, one of his paintings was exhibited at the Salon in Paris (c.1922).[37] Though his early work was rigidly academic, Halife Abdülmecit's later canvases showed a new sensitivity towards the play of light on his subjects. After the declaration of the republic, Abdülmecit went into exile in France and continued to paint and exhibit at the Paris Salons. One of his works, a self-portrait, is in the permanent collection of the Musée Massena in Nice.

Teaching of Art.

Until 1883, the main venues for teaching easel painting in Turkey were the military and naval schools mentioned above. Since its inauguration in 1883, the Academy of Fine Arts has become Turkey's most important centre for teaching painting and sculpture, and where the concepts of the Renaissance and its classical foundations were first encountered.[38] It institutionalized art on a professional level.

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[36]Ataöv, Op.cit, p.26.
[37]Interview with Prince Rifat Jah, Halife Abdülmecit's great grandson, Amman, 15/6/1992.
[38]D.Erbil, "Development of Turkish Sculpture", Transformations of Turkish Culture, pp.136-7.

The Academy had two departments: painting and sculpture. The former has been instrumental in sustaining the only active visual art form in the Western-oriented artistic life of Turkey since the early 19th century, while the focus of the latter shifted from architectural decoration to the field of fine arts. Osman Hamdi modelled the Academy on the École des Beaux Arts in Paris and brought in foreign academic instructors. He believed that the Turkish painters who had trained in the military schools, even if they had been abroad, did not approach or understand art in a manner that would suit the new institution. Only after 1910 did the Academy begin to graduate artists who were qualified to teach in its classrooms and studios.[39]

The Turkish Academy of Fine Arts was modelled after the European art academies that had flourished from the 17th to the 19th centuries. Its academic approach emphasized the rigid conservative rules of drawing and painting, based on the styles and principles of Greek and Roman antiquity. The program also adhered to the concept of classical rationality which appeared devoid of emotion in the figurative style of copying nature. However, during the late 19th century, art academies in Europe became the bastions for opposition to all new ideas in art. The term 'academic' became a synonym for dullness and conservatism, and caused a cleavage between official bodies and the majority of artists outside the academic fold.

Since 1883, Istanbul's Academy has had no rival institution (until today is referred to as the Academy), though it has engendered many provincial academies and institutes, the most important of which is the Gazi Institute, established in Ankara in 1930.[40]

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[39]Ibid, pp.137-8.
[40]Bisharat, Op.cit., p.271.

The teaching of Western-style drawing was introduced into the curricula of teachers' training schools in the mid-19th century, before the inauguration of the Academy of Fine Arts. It was part of Tanzimat policy (the Reform Edict of 1839) to prepare teachers for a new education system. By the time the Academy opened, a generation of young men had already been exposed to Western art forms as part of their regular secondary education. They became the foundation for the active art training that has continued through the teachers' training schools such as the Gazi Institute of Education in Ankara, which has produced some of Turkey's leading painters.[41]

In 1914, the Ottoman government opened the Academy of Fine Arts for Women (Inas Sanayi-i Nefis Mektebi). It was offered as a solution to parents who would not send their daughters to the Academy of Fine Arts because, at the time, mixed education was unheard of in Turkey. The new academy had a dynamic woman artist as its director. Mihri Müşfik Hanim (1887-?) had studied in Paris and Rome and made strong still-lifes and portraits from the world of veiled Istanbul ladies, with soft lines and strong colours (fig. 8). As a director of the Women's Art Academy, she was determined to offer her female students the same opportunities offered to their male counterparts at the Academy. In 1926, the Women's Academy merged with the Academy of Fine Arts, becoming co-educational two years later. In 1950, Mihri Müşfik Hanim emigrated to the United States.[42]

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[41] Ibid, p.272.
[42] Ibid, p.272, Ataöv, Op.cit., p.40.

Women Artists.

Mihri Müşfik was only one of the early women artists in Turkey. Other notable women artists include Müfide Kadri (1890-1912) who had won a medal at a very young age for a painting she exhibited in a Munich gallery in 1911. Harika Sirel (1896), sister of Turkish sculptor Najat Sirel and wife of painter Avni Lifij, drew sensitive impressionistic landscapes from nature. Güzin Duran (1898) was trained by her famous husband, Feyhaman Duran, Sabiha Bozçali (1903) studied art with private tutors before girls were even sent to schools. She went on to Rome to make copies at the Vatican Art Gallery. After World War I, she joined the Haiman studio in Berlin then went to the Munich Academy for three years. In 1931, Bozçali left for Paris and worked with the famous Paul Signac, developing a close friendship with him. Between 1947 and 1949 she worked with the Italian metaphysical painter Giorgio de Chirico. In Turkey, Bozçali participated in the exhibitions of the Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors.[43] Fahrelnissa Zeid, her sister Aliye Berger, and Hale Asaf were three other accomplished women painters.

Early Modern Trends in Painting - The 1914-Generation.

Between 1910 and 1920, graduates of the Academy of Fine Arts, especially those who continued their training in the West, came to represent a new modern outlook. They denied the past of all artistic traditions and styles and assumed a revolutionary attitude. They raised the banner of 'new' art and took over the administration of the Academy of Fine Arts. They subscribed to the spreading of Impressionism throughout Turkey which had already been

[43]Ataöv, Op.cit., pp. 40-1.

replaced in Europe by other, even more modern developments. The most effective Turkish painters emerging in the second decade of the 20th century were referred to as the 1914-Generation. As instructors in the Academy they controlled the education system at the only art institution in the country, thus dominating the whole art scene. In 1914, Ibrahim Çalli (1882-1960) became the first Turkish artist to be appointed to the Academy. He played such a vital role in the development of the art movement that the 1914-Generation group were also referred to as the Çalli Group.[44]

A 1910 graduate of the Academy, Çalli spent the years immediately before World War I in Paris on a scholarship. He trained at Fernand Cormon's workshop and eventually distinguished himself as an artist. Upon his return to Istanbul, he was appointed to the Academy which he injected with an independent approach and freshness of vision far beyond its former imitative skill. Neither a realist nor a fully-fledged impressionist, Çalli applied his oil paints directly onto the canvas with quick, agile brush strokes, without lengthy preparations and sketches. His nudes, portraits, still-lifes, and occasional landscapes were full of vitality (fig. 9). He was inspired by the Turkish War of Independence and executed paintings that emphasized nationalistic feelings and concepts. Through his highly personalized style, Çalli closed the door on the academic realism of the previous generation. He was an innovator who exerted great influence upon the younger generation of artists during his 30-year teaching career. Çalli was an enthusiastic pedagogue and a flexible artist who opened new vistas for Turkish painting, always welcoming new and unconventional ideas such as Cubism. The Çalli Group trained the next generation of painters who went to Europe in the 1920s. In 1909, with the backing of Prince Abdülmecit, the group formed

[44]Bisharat, Op.cit., pp.272-3.

Turkey's first art association, the Association of Ottoman Painters (Osmanli Ressamlar Çemiyeti). Its members were military and civilian artists. The main activity of this association, which continued to influence the art scene until the mid-1920s, was an annual group exhibition. It was later renamed the Association of Turkish Painters (Türk Ressamlar Birliği). The Group also published the first periodical of art news and criticism, *Promoter of Ideas*, or *Naşir-i Efkâr*. It was financially supported by the painter-calligrapher Crown Prince Abdülmecit.[45]

At the Academy of Fine Arts, Çalli's appointment was followed by Hikmet Onat's in 1915, Nazmi Ziya Güran's in 1918, and finally Feyhaman Duran's in 1919. The teaching of art thus passed into the hands of the generation of the Constitutional Monarchy (Meşrutiyet). Namik Ismail joined these artists upon his return from Germany while Avni Lifij, an eminent member of this generation, became an instructor in the Department of Decorative Arts in 1923. All the above mentioned artists were members of the 1914-Generation. By introducing Impressionism into Turkish modern art, they became the defenders of a new colour concept and art style based on free, agile brush strokes. Old dark colour schemes were supplanted by fresh pinks, yellows, greens and purples applied with a careless energy and in thick layers. The earlier placid landscapes of Istanbul and the Bosphorus were replaced by reclining female nudes and multi-figured and narrative compositions. The new style was a novelty in Turkish painting which the public quickly accepted. Unlike Europeans, people in Turkey were not familiar with a concept of peinture classique, and therefore had no preconceived prejudice against new styles. The Ministry of War gave the artists of the 1914-Generation a large workshop filled with cannons, rifles,

[45]Ataöv, Op.cit., pp.22-6, Erol, Op.cit., pp.149,156-8.

uniformed models and other military equipment and asked them to produce compositions glorifying the battles of the Turkish army at Çanakkale (Gallipoli). The Ministry took journalists, literary figures and artists (including Çalli and his peers) to the military front during World War I so that they could translate their first-hand experiences in writing and onto canvas. The paintings that came out of these episodes were exhibited in Vienna and Berlin. After the declaration of the Republic, the same artists made important paintings dealing with the War of Independence. Meanwhile, a significant development in portraiture took place at the behest of Istanbul's enlightened and wealthy circles, who wanted to have their likenesses painted. Many statesmen, starting with Kemal Atatürk, had their portraits made. The image of Atatürk eventually took on an official character and became a symbol of modern Turkey.[46] It was the first personality cult to develop in the modern art of the Middle East. Numerous paintings and statues of Atatürk, in all sizes and various poses, were made by established as well as obscure artists (fig. 10). They were distributed in government offices, airports, schools, universities and official buildings throughout Turkey.

During the period of the Constitutional Monarchy and after World War I, the Committee of Union and Progress sent talented artists and other young men abroad to give them first-hand experience with European culture so that they could improve their talent. This program prolonged the ongoing efforts begun in the 18th century to renovate the Ottoman State. However, in the early years of the 20th century, Ottoman intellectuals and ideologues of the Committee of Union and Progress believed that the civic modernization programme needed to be balanced with the principle of cultural nationalism,

[46]Erol, Op.cit., pp.151-6.

a dualism that continued under the republic and remained potent until well beyond the 1950s.[47]

Other prominent artists of the 1914-Generation included Ruhi Arel, Hikmet Onat, Major Sami Yetik, Avni Lifij, Ismail Namik, Feyhaman Duran and Nazmi Zia Güran. Ruhi Arel (1880-1931) accompanied Hikmat Onat to Paris and together they attended Cormon's studio. Arel was especially devoted to the working classes whose everyday life became a source of inspiration for him. He represented Turkish folkloric elements and ethnic life in his work and was the only member of the group who did not come under the influence of Impressionism. Arel's technique exhibited a force of design and a lack of emphasis on colour and line. Closely connected to the Committee of Union and Progress, he executed large canvases with political subjects relating to Atatürk.[48]

Hikmet Onat (1882-1977), who lived until the ripe age of ninety five, was obsessed by the sea and the Bosphorus. He joined the Naval Academy of Istanbul but soon resigned and went to Paris. Though he worked with Cormon at the École des Beaux Arts, his numerous landscapes of Istanbul did not include human figures which never really attracted him. Driven by his great passion for the sea, he worked outdoors along the Bosphorus, painting with total devotion until the end of his days. He used dynamic brush strokes with clear outlines of his objects and showed a respect for the logical elements of painting. His main interest was to depict, simply and realistically, the reflection of light on the water (fig. 11).[49]

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[47]Ibid, pp.159-60.
[48]Ibid, p.158, Ataöv, Op.cit., pp.27-30.
[49]Ataöv, Op.cit., pp.26-7, Erol, Op.cit., pp.159-60.

Although Major Sami Yetik (1876-1945) was the last representative of the soldier-painters, he was also a member of the Association of Turkish Painters and adopted the techniques of the 1914-Generation. In his large-scale canvases, Yetik dealt with themes relating to the War of Independence and contributed to developing an iconography of the war by depicting ox-carts carrying artillery to the front, women burdened with loads of ammunition on their shoulders, and charging cavalry.[50]

Osman Hamdi Bey discovered the talent of Avni Lifij (1889-1927), and after one year at the Academy he sent Lifij to Paris with the support of Crown Prince Abdülmecit, who remained a life-long friend, patron and student of the artist. In Paris, Lifij studied at the École des Beaux Arts and in Cormon's workshop but refused to be influenced by the stereotype *clichés*. He also studied the frescoes of Puvis de Chavannes in the Sorbonne and the Panthéon. Though he valued the naturalistic modifications introduced by Chavannes, the mural he painted in Istanbul after his return - *Municipal Works in Kadiköy* - did not manifest any identifiable traces of the French artist's influence (fig. 12). He produced countless drawings and black and white sketches with a passion unlike that of his contemporaries.[51] His works betray a melancholic atmosphere that pervades his extraordinarily soft, colourful oil paintings. At an early age, Lifij showed a remarkable talent manifested in his exceptional control over subtleties of interpretation with an unfailing confidence and power of execution.

Namik Ismail (1890-1935) first went to Paris to train in Cormon's workshop. He then attended the Leipzig Academy in Germany as well as the private schools run by Lovis Corinth and Max Liebermann. He used a

[50]Erol, Op.cit., p.158-59.
[51]Ibid, pp.160-63, Ataöv, Op.cit., p.26.

vigorous brush technique which was evident in his nature scenes, reclining women and compositions of Anatolian rural life. When he died, Ismail was the director of the Academy of Fine Arts.[52]

Another prominent member of the 1914-Generation group was Feyhaman Duran (1886-1970). After joining the Academy in Istanbul, he was sent to Paris by Prince Abbas Halim. Unlike Onat, Duran was not keen on landscapes and multi-figured compositions. He mostly painted rich and vivid portraits at which he excelled. The brush technique of his nudes is reminiscent of French impressionists (fig. 13). Duran also taught at the Academy and was more tolerant than his peers of the younger generation's attacks and criticism of artists of his generation which started in the 1920s.[53]

Nazmi Ziya Güran (1881-1937) was a leading impressionist painter and a master at capturing light on objects. As a youngster, he had observed Paul Signac work in Istanbul and was influenced by him. A graduate of the Istanbul Academy of Fine Arts, Güran went to Paris where he spent five years training in the studios of Marcel Bachet and Cormon, before returning to Istanbul to teach at the Academy. Always working in the open air, Güran painted scenes of the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn capturing the play of the Mediterranean sun on water and nature, and experimenting with the plain colours of traditional miniature paintings.[54] Other members of the 1914-Generation group were Sami Boyar (1880-1967), Mehmet Ali Laga (1878-1947), Hasan Veçih Bereketoğlu (1895-1973) and Pertev Boyar (1897-1980).[55]

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[52]Ataöv, Op.cit., p.30, Erol, Op.cit., p.164.
[53]Ataöv, Op.cit., p.30, Erol, Op.cit., p.169.
[54]Ataöv, Op.cit., p.26, Erol, Op.cit., p.171.
[55]Erol, Op.cit., pp.166, 69.

The Second Generation and Beyond.

As evidenced with the 1914-Generation, local ideologies and government policies in Turkey have influenced the emergence of art groups. The first reaction to the 1914-Generation and the Association of Turkish Painters, which influenced modern Turkish art for a long period of time, was the formation in 1923 of the New Painting Society. The members of this group considered themselves the true representatives of the Generation of the Republic or the Republican Generation and held their first exhibition in 1924. Deriving their enthusiasm and faith from their new state, they rejected the ideals of Çalli's older generation which they claimed had monopolized Turkey's art world. The group essentially consisted of young graduates of the Academy of Fine Arts who were sent to France, Germany and Italy. Their claim to innovation, however, did not go beyond the choice of subject matter. Around 1928/29, a new group was founded, calling itself the Association of Independent Painters and Sculptors. The members (who had been active in the short-lived New Painting Society) were mostly young artists working as art instructors or simply civil servants. All were passionate art lovers and hoped to benefit by belonging to an established group. They published a manifesto in 1929, in which their declared aim was to aid in the development of the rebirth of Turkish painting, and to help the national fine arts attain the standard it deserved. They considered the older artists, including their own teachers, to be representatives of 'official' art. The core of the Independents, whose membership continually grew, included Ali Avni Çelebi, Hale Asaf, Muhittin Sebati, Zeki Koçamemi, Çevat Dereli, Refik Epikman, Mahmut Çuda, Şeref Akdik and Nurullah Berk. One member of this group of intellectuals, Burhan Toprak, later became director of the Academy of Fine Arts. The critics' reaction to the Independents was that

they were too Europeanized in their style and choice of subject matter. Evidently, the question of local and national awareness regarding artistic identity was being raised among Turkish intellectuals as early as the 1930s.[56]

The Independents attempted to develop an intellectual style opposed to the naturalistic and spontaneous paintings of the 1914-Generation which was based on Impressionism. The two leading figures of the group, Zeki Koçamemi (1901-1959) and Ali Çelebi (b.1904) attended Munich's Fine Arts Academy in 1923. Both artists remained at the academy until 1927 studying with Hans Hofmann and taking up his Constructivism. When they exhibited their work in 1927/28 they stirred up interest among intellectuals. In contrast to previously exhibited work, Koçamemi and Çelebi's post-cubist and constructivist paintings emphasized the affinity between their deformed, fragmented figures and space, while disregarding the values of colour and light. Çelebi revitalized his expressionistic style (fig. 14) and eventually reached a vigorous form of semi-abstraction. Koçamemi represented his subject matter through architectural constructions divided into various planes.[57]

Another member of the Independents was Refik Epikman (1902-1974). He went to Paris after graduating from Istanbul's Academy at the head of his class. In Paris, he joined the classes of Paul-Albert Laurens at the Académie Julian. After his return to Turkey, Epikman settled in Ankara where he did pure, non-narrative work which depicted highly structured compositions that emphasized the importance of design (fig. 15). Eventually, Epikman's style evolved towards geometric abstraction with meticulously

[56]Ibid, pp.172-81.
[57]Ibid, pp.183-4.

calculated equilibrium.[58] In their works, the Independents severed all ties with the formal academic training and styles of the 1914-Group. Both in style and subject matter, they focused on internationalism rather than regionalism and showed the artists' preference for post-impressionist Western schools.

In 1933, a new artists' group was formed. Five painters including Nurullah Berk, Elif Naçi, Abidin Dino, Zeki Faik Izer, Çemal Tollu and a sculptor, Zühtü Müridoglu, founded the D-Group. The letter D was chosen as the fourth in the Turkish alphabet, indicating that the group was the fourth artistic organization to be established in Turkey. Membership was closely regulated and in time Eşref Üren, Turgut Zaîm, Fahrelnissa Zeid, Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu, and his wife Eren Eyüboğlu joined. The members collectively rejected the Turkish impressionism adopted by the Çalli Group and their teachers at the Academy. They tried to intellectualize art and bring contemporary European artistic trends to Turkey as quickly as soon as possible, out of a desire to keep up with the changes brought about by the new Republic. They paid tribute to both traditional Western art and the Italian Renaissance masters as well as contemporary European trends. Most of the members gained first-hand knowledge of leading art movements when they trained with well-known European artists such as Gromaire, Léger, Lhôte, Friesz, Despiau and Gimond in Paris.[59]

The most outstanding member of the D-Group was Nurullah Berk (1906-1982). Painter, art educator, writer, and critic, Berk trained at the Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul and the École des Beaux Arts in Paris. During his second trip to Paris, he worked with André Lhôte and Fernand

[58]Ibid, pp.183-4.
[59]Ibid, pp.198-200.

Léger, and became an advocate of Cubism (fig. 16). He was instrumental in modernizing Turkish painting through his participation in the D-Group and the Independent Painters Association. Berk also co-founded the Turkish branch of the International Art Critics Association. Through his books and lectures, he was able to draw the attention of European critics to Turkish art and organize international exhibitions for Turkish artists abroad. Nurullah Berk and the other members of the D-Group introduced Cubism, Constructivism and Expressionism, to Turkey on a large scale.[60] With the Independents and the D-Group Turkish artists adopted European post-impressionist models and became totally modernized.

Official Patronage.

The Ottoman sultans had always been patrons of the arts. Custom dictated that each sultan was trained in a wide range of traditional arts, from the composition of poetry and music to miniature painting, cabinet-making and calligraphy. The first sultan to show interest in Western art was Mahmud II (1808-1839), a highly cultivated man who introduced many European innovations into his capital. Western music, the piano, popular bands, orchestras and theatre all based on the European model, made their appearance in Turkey during his reign. He was also the first sultan to have his portrait publicly displayed, a custom totally alien to earlier Ottoman traditions. During the reign of his son, Sultan Abdülmecit (1839-1861), official portraiture became more widespread and exhibitions were held in the palace. Sultan Abdülmecit was also interested in Western music. In 1847, Franz Liszt gave a recital for him and the Sultan presented Liszt with an

[60]Ibid, pp.200-1, Bisharat, Op.cit., p.274, Ataöv, Op.cit.,pp.42-4.

imperial decoration.[61] Royal patronage continued until the demise of the Empire.

After the founding of the Republic, state-sponsored activities in the arts increased. The number of art scholarships to Europe multiplied, and government art schools and galleries were opened in both Ankara and Istanbul. The development of Turkish modern art appears to have gone through alternating phases of localization and internationalization, mainly evident in the subject matter depicted. From 1937 to 1944, the republic sponsored annual trips for artists to travel throughout Turkey and paint the Anatolian steppes, providing them with all the materials they needed. These tours lasted over eight years, included 53 artists, and covered 63 of Turkey's 67 provinces. They were instrumental in mobilizing national trends by incorporating Anatolian motifs and subject matter in Turkish art throughout the ensuing decades.[62]

From the 1940's onwards, Turkish art has consistently moved along a dual track. In style and subject matter, it incorporated Western art schools with local trends. The only omission in Turkey's modern art has been the use of calligraphy. With Atatürk's 'language reform' in 1928 and the substitution of the Arabic with the Roman alphabet, all ties were severed with the linguistic and aesthetic heritage of Ottoman Turkish. Thus, the integration of calligraphy within the framework of modern art forms, as it happened in other Islamic countries, was totally absent in Turkey. Only from the 1960s onwards did few artists such as Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu, Elif Naci, Adnan Turani, Erol Akyavaş and Burhan Doğançay include Arabic characters in

[61]Çizgen, Op.cit., pp.13-4.
[62]Bisharat, Op.cit., p. 274.

their abstract works. However, the practice of classical calligraphy continued though on a smaller scale than during the Ottoman period.

Characteristics of Modern Turkish Art:

As the first Islamic country to experiment with European modern art, Turkey was able to develop certain traits that are distinctive to it.

1. Art training in the West: An important phenomenon of Turkish modern art is the early, first-hand exposure to Western training since the 19th century. Many early artists studied and trained with their contemporary European peers. The first group were the soldier-painters such as Şeker Ahmet Paşa, Süleyman Seyyit, and Osman Hamdi who were sent to Europe in the 19th century and studied with masters like Louis and Gustave Boulanger, Jean Léon Gérôme and Eugène Fromentin. During the second decade of the 20th century, a number of artists went to France and Germany, either on scholarships or on their own. They were exposed to vibrant artistic communities and either visited or worked with the trend-setters of modern Western art. Numerous Turkish painters joined the workshop of Fernand Cormon in Paris. Other young artists were able to learn from Paul Signac who worked in Istanbul. The Germans Hofmann, Corinth and Liebermann, and the French Bachet, Laurens, Simon, Lhôte, Léger, Gromaire and Despiau were not merely signatures on reproductions seen in books or paintings hanging in galleries. They were teachers who distilled their techniques and ideas for young Turkish artists, who in turn returned to their country and were instrumental in introducing Impressionism, Cubism, Constructivism and other styles into the mainstream of contemporary Turkish art. Rarely have the artists of an Islamic society been exposed in such numbers to Western teachers of such calibre.

2. Academic teaching: The first group of Turkish artists went to Europe at a time when European painters had started to reject academic teaching and embrace Impressionism. However, Turkish artists were unaffected by the revolution in Western painting. They consciously conformed to academic teachings for, unlike the Europeans, the Turks did not have a classical tradition against which to revolt. Their classical artistic heritage in painting was the two-dimensional, Islamic miniature which bore no relationship to the academic teachings they were learning from Europe. In a way, their orientation to the concepts and aesthetics of Western art was in itself a revolt against their own artistic traditions. Not until the second decade of the 20th century and the arrival of the 1914-Group did Turkish artists adopt Impressionism.

3. Women artists: While it was rare for women artists to gain recognition in the Islamic world, this was very much a phenomenon in the early stages of the development of modern art in Turkey. It started during the Ottoman period when women were still behind veils. Even prior to Atatürk's revolution, which claims to have championed the cause of women's equality, women were given an opportunity in art. The trend has strongly continued under the republic, and today, Turkey has four generations of recognized women artists.

4. Art groups: A fourth phenomenon of the modern art movement in Turkey is the active role that art associations have played. From the soldier-painters to the 1914-Generation and up to the D-Group, every art group has, in one way or another, contributed to the growth and evolution of modern Turkish art. Every group rejected what was current at its time, rebelling against conventional norms as the next innovator to modernize Turkish art. It was thus that old trends faded and new ones began.

5. State sponsorship: Ever since the golden age of the Ottoman Empire, the state as embodied in the sultans, has always sponsored all the arts. The rulers and their high officials patronized local artists as well as the introduction of Western culture into Turkey. In the 19th century, the palace was instrumental in shifting local artistic trends towards a European aesthetic. This kind of sponsorship continued under the Constitutional Monarchy. At the founding of the Turkish Republic, Atatürk declared that his greatest ambition was to elevate national culture by emphasizing the development of all the arts. The government launched an intensive program to increase the number of art scholarships abroad, open art museums and institutes, direct artists towards nationalistic subjects, and help them materially. In fact, the state utilized art and culture to arouse and strengthen nationalist sentiments among the population, which consequently contributed to the acceleration and development of contemporary Turkish art.

Chapter 3.

Egypt.

Egypt was the first Arab country to formally embrace Western art. The French invasion by Napoleon's armies in 1798 took the country by complete surprise and abruptly exposed it to European civilization and European aesthetics were introduced to the urban Egyptian intellectual milieu, although it took Egyptians more than one hundred years to adopt and adapt these foreign concepts to suit their own interests. By the same token, Egypt's ancient history captivated the French, specially since 150 savants accompanied Napoleon's Egyptian campaign. Among them were historians and painters such as David and Rigoult, as well as geologists, botanists, geographers, archaeologists, writers and members of the Académie Française. When the military campaign ended, a number of French scientists and artists stayed on to study and record the monuments and paint native scenes. They adopted local dress, integrated themselves into society, and some were responsible for introducing Western painting into Egypt.

Westernization Movement.

In the aftermath of the French withdrawal, Muhammad Ali Pasha eventually gained power as effective ruler of Egypt. He became wālī in 1805 and soon made clear that he hoped to build Egypt into a modern country. He displayed interest in the arts as well as sciences and military skills, and he sent several study missions to Europe, which concentrated on learning the arts of engraving, painting and sculpture, among other subjects. These individuals taught at technical craft schools once they returned. The palaces

and public parks built during Muhammad Ali's reign were designed and decorated by foreign architects and artists who filled them with statues and paintings. In this manner, Baroque and Rococo taste was introduced into Ottoman Egypt.[63] Meanwhile, a number of foreign artists, among whom were the Orientalists David Roberts, Eugène Fromentin, Théodore Frère, Adrien Dauzats, John Varley, Emile-Lecomte Vernet, Marc-Gabriel-Charles Gleyre and William Holman Hunt, visited the country. Others, such as John Frederick Lewis, Jean-Léon Gérôme and Leopold Karl Müller settled in Cairo for months, sometimes years.[64]

Under the Khedive Isma'il (1862-1879), Egypt became virtually independent of the Ottoman Empire. The attempt to establish modern institutions, initiated by Muhammad Ali, continued. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 was an occasion that further accelerated exposure to Western culture. Isma'il used the opportunity to present his country as part of the civilized European world, rather than backward Africa. The Khedive invited the Emperor of Austria, Empress Eugénie of France, the Crown Prince of Prussia, writers and artists such as Théophile Gautier, Émile Zola, Henrik Ibsen, Eugène Fromentin, and a number of famous scientists and musicians, to the opening ceremony. Cairo's Opera House was inaugurated with a cantata in honour of Isma'il and a performance of Verdi's Rigoletto.[65]

Eventually, Western artistic influences came to pervade Egyptian upper class society. Alfred Jacquemart made statues of Muhammad Ali and Suleyman Pasha that were erected in Cairo. He also created sculptures of four lions that were mounted at each end of the Qasr al-Nil Bridge. Cordier

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[63]R.Iskandar, K.Mallakh, S.Sharouni, Thamānūna sana min al-fann, p.11.
[64]P. Jullian, The Orientalists, pp.133-45.
[65]A. Hourani, A History of the Arab Peoples, pp.282-3.

designed a statue of Ibrahim Basha to be placed in the Opera Square. Similar public sculptures were also unveiled in Alexandria. Until the beginning of the 20th century, the rendering of such public sculptures was confined to European artists who were commissioned by the rulers, princes, and élite as one manifestation of their desire to emulate the West and decorate their urban and rural palaces with paintings and architectural ornamentations. They imported craftsmen from Greece, Armenia and France to train local decorators in tromp l'oeil. The Islamic trend in Egyptian art was thus replaced by the latest European currents. When the number of resident French artists increased, they all moved to Kharanfash street which became a dimunititive Montparnasse. Yet, despite their numbers, these artists were only popular among a minority of upper class Egyptians. The majority of the people remained indifferent to their work.[66]

In 1891, the Orientalist painters living in Egypt held Egypt's first exhibition ever at the Opera House. It was attended by the Khedive and a number of dignitaries who followed his example and bought works to please him rather than out of pure appreciation. Among the exhibiting artists were Ralli, Rasengy, Bogdanof,[67] and an Egyptian painter named Yakoub Sanou', who gave painting lessons to the children of the wealthy. Following their success, the French painters made improvements on their street and changed its name to Art Street (Shari^{e} al-fann). They began organizing European concerts for affluent Egyptians in the courtyard of one of the houses. In 1902, a second exhibition, *Cercle Artistique,* took place in an antique shop. It included the works of Bebi Martin and Bonello, and was inaugurated by

[66]Iskandar, Mallakh, Sharouni, Op.cit., pp.11-2.
[67]I could not find reference to Rasengy and Bogdanof, neither in "Petit Larousse de la Peinture" nor in books on Orientalist artists.

the Khedive who suggested that the unsold works be auctioned off.[68] Thus, the first art auction thus took place in Cairo almost accidently.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the modern concept of nationalism was embraced by a number of intellectuals led by Mustafa Kamil Basha, the founder of the Egyptian National Party. They advocated independence through peaceful means by educating and mobilizing masses of people in progressive action programs. One of the intellectuals in this group was Prince Yusuf Kamal, an enthusiastic patron of the arts who took upon himself his people's 'education of taste'. The idea of an art school was contemplated alongside that of a university. The British opposed the establishment of a university at first, while some popular and religious factions considered an art school to be antithetical to the principles of Islam. The latter debate was settled when the Mufti of Egypt, Sheikh Muhammad 'Abdu, who was a great reformer and enlightened Islamic scholar, came out in favour of art education and the restoration and preservation of antiquities.[69] In 1908, Prince Yusuf Kamal opened the School of Fine Arts in Cairo. It was the first institution in the Arab world to teach Western art. For twenty years, the school provided free tuition and training for talented Egyptian youth, requiring no prerequisite other than the wish to study art. The lack of accomplished artists in Western trends forced the school to employ foreigners to teach painting, decoration and sculpture. The school proved to be an immediate success and students from Cairo as well as the countryside enrolled in it. Its first art students comprised the nucleus of the pioneer generation of modern Egyptian artists. They were Mahmoud

[68]Iskandar, Mallakh, Sharouni, Op.cit., pp13-4.
[69]Ibid, pp.4-5.

Mukhtar, Muhammad Nagy, Mahmoud Said, Raghib Ayyad, Youssef Kamel and Habib Gorgi.[70]

The Pioneers.

The group of pioneer Egyptian artists laid down the basic concepts of their country's modern art movement. They tried to combine their ancient artistic traditions with contemporary techniques and teachings, reshaping them within a distinct Egyptian individuality that emerged out of the country's Pharaonic-Mediterranean past. No artist considered reverting to Egypt's Arab-Islamic traditions at that time. Unlike the Levant, Pan-Arabism was alien to Egyptians during the first two decades of the 20th century, while Islamic culture was regarded only as a phase in their historic development. The first graduates of the School of Fine Arts expressed a nationalistic trait based on Egypt's Pharaonic past which reflected the general atmosphere of the time.[71]

Mahmoud Mukhtar (1891-1934), who is considered the father of modern Arab sculpture, interpreted his people's struggle against foreign domination and exalted Egypt's national heroes. Growing up as a peasant, Mukhtar came to Cairo when he was seventeen years old to enroll at the School of Fine Arts. After graduating, he became the first Egyptian to be sent on an art scholarship abroad by his benefactor Prince Yusuf Kamal. At the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, he shed all his oriental inhibitions and at his confession became a Parisian.[72] He nevertheless, managed to safeguard

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[70]M.T.Hussein, "Egypt", Contemporary Art from the Islamic World, p.33.
[71]Ibid, p.34.
[72]Karnouk, Modern Egyptian Art, p.11-2.

his Egyptian identity and later held regular exhibitions at the Salon des Artistes Français in Paris, as he did in Cairo, where he was considered one of Egypt's national heroes.

Mukhtar's early works evinced a romantic trait reminiscent of 19th century Orientalist sculptures and had a narrative, thematic quality. Like Iraq, Egypt had a long tradition of figurative sculpture that dated back to Pharaonic times. In his later works, Mukhtar revived this tradition which had been dormant for about three thousand years. He was the first modern artist to use pink Aswan granite, a material extensively used by Ancient Egyptians. He was often commissioned by the government and his gigantic works were publicly displayed. His most famous piece was the pink granite *Egypt's Awakening* (fig. 17). It had a rising sphinx and the stylized figure of an unveiled Egyptian peasant woman standing next to it. The statue embodied the symbol of Pharaonic civilization rising from the new Egyptian nation. The woman at its side personified the people and coincided with Egypt's feminist movement, which called for the emancipation of women.

After finishing *Egypt's Awakening*, Mukhtar's forms took up what was later referred to as the Neo-Pharaonic style. He used ancient hieroglyphic symbolism and borrowed a classical structural stylization for the formation of his figures, always keeping a thematic quality in the work. By adapting Western techniques and training to his cultural artistic heritage, Mukhtar furnished Egyptian art with a new identity that disseminated nationalistic ideas but without xenophobia.

Mukhtar was the first Egyptian artist to exhibit his works abroad and win an international award. His statue *Aïda*, inspired by Verdi's opera, was displayed at the Grand Palais in Paris in 1912. In 1925, he won a gold medal, also in Paris, for his bust of the Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum. He

became the first Egyptian to hold a solo exhibition in Paris in 1930. Furthermore, the French government bought his sculpture *Nile Bride*, for the Tuillerie Museum. Mukhtar was also the first local artist to have his statues publicly displayed. In 1938, the Egyptian government opened the Mukhtar Museum which was the first museum in the Arab world, to be consecrated for works of an individual artist.[73] Although he was a sculptor, Mukhtar was important in Egypt's modern art movement for being the first artist to advocate through his work, for a national artistic identity and set an example for other artists to follow.

In painting, Mahmoud Said (1897-1964) was the first to draw on local subjects by depicting genre scenes and portraits of both simple folk and society figures, in an individual, lush and sensual style. A lawyer by profession, he came from a prominent family whose niece, Farida Zulfikar, later became Queen Farida of Egypt. Said studied painting in Alexandria under Emilia Casanato and Antonio Zanin between 1914 and 1916. From 1920, he travelled extensively around Europe for ten years, looking at as much Western art as possible. While in Paris, he joined the Free Atelier at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière where he trained in painting for one more year.[74] Back in Egypt, Said suffered from a lack of recognition by his family because in those days, Egyptian society did not regard art as a serious profession. Only foreigners showed any kind of appreciation for his work. In 1947, he resigned from his legal career and dedicated himself entirely to painting, taking part in the yearly Salons du Caire and Alexandrie as well as the Venice Biennales of 1938, 1950 and 1952.[75] Unlike the Orientalist artists

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[73]Iskandar, Mallakh, Sharouni, Op.cit., p.18.

[74]Ibid, p.73.

[75]Egyptian Contemporary Art, a catalogue published by the Jordan National Gallery, no page number.

who preceded him, Said's paintings with sculpturally-composed figures were meant to simplify everyday events, ignoring details and turning every figure into an archetype. His individual style displayed a mixture of Cubism and Expressionism (fig. 18). After he died, the Ministry of Culture bought his house in Alexandria and transformed it into a gallery where 40 of his works were permanently displayed. (Unfortunately, most of them were damaged when they were secretly taken to Israel for an exhibition during Anwar Sadat's rule). Despite being a member of the old aristocracy, Said was the first Egyptian artist to be honoured with the State Appreciation Award for Art in 1959.[76]

Muhammad Nagy (1888-1956) studied law at the University of Lyon in France, graduating in 1910. He then spent four years in Florence, investigating Renaissance art and architecture. Upon his return to Egypt, Nagy went to Luxor to examine first-hand Pharaonic treasures and monuments. After World War I, he travelled to Giverney in France, where he befriended Albert Marquet and Claude Monet who introduced him to French Impressionism. In 1925, he became a diplomat and was posted to Brazil and France. Nagy resigned from the Foreign Service five years later and dedicated himself to painting. In 1931, he was sent by his government on a one year artistic mission to Ethiopia where he painted some exceptional landscapes and local religious and social celebrations. He also made portraits of Emperor Haile Selassie I, members of his court, and churchmen in their ceremonial robes. Nagy's Ethiopian works were exhibited at the 1932 Salon du Caire and caused a sensation among the public. That same year, Nagy founded the Alexandria Atelier and became its president. In 1935, he established the Cairo Atelier for Artists and Writers which, until the

[76]Iskandar, Mallakh, Sharouni, Op.cit., p.74.

present, remains an important cultural association, second in size only to the Artists Union. One of Nagy's works was acquired by the Tate Gallery following a one-person exhibition in London in 1937. He was the first Egyptian director of the Higher School of Fine Arts (1937-1939), after which he was appointed Director of the Museum of Modern Art in Cairo. In 1947, he became president of the Egyptian Academy of Fine Arts in Rome.[77] Nagy started out as an impressionist and then moved on to Expressionism in his portraits and landscapes, using strong colours and well-balanced forms (fig. 19).

Raghib Ayyad (1892-1982), a graduate of the School of Fine Arts in Cairo (1911), was a catalyst in the founding of the Egyptian Academy in Rome. In 1925, he was sent on a scholarship to Rome, and was appointed a teacher at the College of Applied Arts upon his return. Ayyad then went on to teach at the School of Fine Arts before becoming director of the Museum of Modern Art in 1950.[78]

Ayyad revealed a freedom from the academic style and was one of Egypt's first painters to draw on his Pharaonic cultural background. He painted peasants with their animals, market scenes, and popular celebrations in an expressionistic, symbolic manner. For a long period, he specialized in depicting Coptic church icons and paintings. Ayyad's religious works, which portrayed churches throughout Egypt and monasteries in the desert, were charged with spirituality (fig. 20). His students followed his example of choosing Egyptian subjects and interpreting them through a modern aesthetic.[79]

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[77]Ibid, pp.71-2.
[78]Ibid, p.31.
[79]Ibid, p.32.

Ahmad Sabri (1889-1955) graduated from the School of Fine Arts in 1914. Between 1919 and 1923, he went to Paris on his own and studied painting at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière and Académie Julian. Upon his return, Sabri worked for some time drawing insects at the Ministry of Agriculture. He then transferred to the Ministry of Public Works which funded his scholarship to Paris where he trained with Paul Laurant and Emanuel Faugere. He exhibited his painting, *The Nun*, at the Salon d'Automne in the Grand Palais, and won a gold medal. Upon his return in 1929, Sabri taught at the School of Fine Arts and later became chairman of the Painting Department at the College of Fine Arts in Cairo, where he remained until his death. During his last years, he gradually lost his eyesight and had to give up painting.[80] Sabri's sensitive, impressionistic portraits of Egyptian personalities and landscapes formed the nucleus of Impressionism in his country (fig. 21).

Other pioneer artists of the Egyptian modern art movement were Youssef Kamel, Seif Wanli, Ramsis Younan, Hussein Bikar, Muhammad Hassan, Hussein Fawzi, Sabri Ragheb, Marghuerite Nakhla, Abdel Kader Rizk and Salah Taher. Most of them graduated from Cairo's School of Fine Arts, and some continued their training in Paris and Rome, acquiring valuable, firsthand exposure to post-impressionist styles in Europe. Most of the works of this generation were thematic and depicted local customs and landscapes from the Egyptian countryside. However, the artists recorded what they saw according to well-known European styles. Their local subject matter was their sole expression of artistic identity.

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[80]Ibid, p.35-6.

Foreign Artists Living in Egypt.

From the turn of the 20th century and until the 1950s, Egypt's Greek and Italian communities lived mainly in Alexandria. Apart from the Orientalist painters of the 19th century, many artists from these communities were instrumental in training local talent and introducing Western art into the country. Among these artists were the Greeks Constantin Zoghrafos, Litsas, and Madame Kravia, and the Italians Arturo Zanieri, Cevilini, Gelvani, Giacomo Scaliti, Aturino Bechi, Angelo Polo, Enrico Brandani, Antonio Zanin, and Emelia Casanato.[81] All gave lessons in their own studios and played the same role as an art institute would in the education of Alexandrian artists. It should be stressed that Alexandria's art movement developed independently from that of Cairo. Under the tutelage of the foreign resident artists, pioneers like Mahmoud Said, Seif and Adham Wanli, Muhammad Nagy and Kamil Moustafa were able to flourish and contribute to their country's artistic development.[82]

Women Artists.

Unlike other Arab countries, Egypt produced a number of early women artists who began painting even before the School of Fine Arts was established. Among this group were the sculptor, Princess Samīha Ḥussein, the daughter of Sultan Hussein Kamil;[83] the famous women rights activist, Huda Shaʿrawī; Sharifa Riyad, the wife of the art patron Wissa Wassef; Mrs

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[81]The spelling of the Greek and Italian names might not be accurate because they were translated from Arabic.

[82]Iskandar, Mallakh, Sharouni, Op.cit., pp.69-78

[83]Sultan Ḥussein Kamil (1914-1917) came to the throne in Egypt, after Khedive Abbas Hilmi and before King Ahmad Fuad .

Hussein Sirri; Mrs. Mahmoud Sirri; and Nafisa Ahmad Abdeen.[84] When drawing and painting lessons were introduced into the curricula by the Ministry of Education, girls' schools were included in the program as well. The art teachers and inspectors were all British and art lessons consisted of copying and enlarging pictures. Afifa Tawfik was the first female student to be sent on a funded art scholarship to England in 1924. In 1925, Zeinab ʿAbdu, Iskandara Gabriel and ʿIsmat Kamal followed her on scholarships in chemistry, biology and physical fitness. At the end of their first year, their scholarships were changed to painting. They returned to Egypt after four years to work as art instructors at girls' schools. Following in their footsteps, Alice Tadros, Adalat Sidki, Inʿam Said and Kawkab Yusuf went to England to study art. Upon their return, they introduced modern teaching methods that used psychology in art education.[85] Egypt has since bred a number of prominent women artists, including Marghuerite Nakhla (fig. 22), Gazbia Sirri, Inji Iflatoun, Iʿtidal Hassan, Minhatallah Hilmi, and Rabab Nimr, among others.

Teaching of Art.

Egypt was the first Arab country to formalize art education by establishing state-run institutes and schools for both applied and fine arts.

Opened by the government in 1835, the School of Arts and Decoration, was the first school to formally train craftsmen in Islamic design, decorative metalwork, textiles, woodcarving, and carpentry. It later grew into the College of Applied Arts which graduated a number of pioneer designers and artists such as Said el-Sadr (1908-1985), Ahmed Osman (1907-

[84]Iskandar, Mallakh, Sharouni, Op.cit., p.29.
[85]Ibid, pp.98-9.

1965), Mansour Faraj (b.1907), and Abdul Aziz Fahim (b.1908). In 1899, the Khedive Teachers' Training School was founded; it was later renamed the Sultaniyya Teachers' School, and finally denominated the Higher Institute for Teachers. Some of its graduates, Hussein Youssef Amin (b.1906), Hamed Said (b.1892), and Shafik Rizk (b.1908), for example were among the leaders of the modern art movement and helped form several artistic groups.[86]

The College of Applied Arts was founded in 1868 to train skilled workers. In 1909, a division of Arts and Decorative Industries was added to its former sections of Mechanics and Electricity, and Building and Planning. The new department had three sections: 1. textile, weaving and dying; 2. carving, engraving and carpentry; and 3. decorative metalwork. In 1918/19, the Department of Decorative Industries became an independent school under the directorship of the Englishman, William Stuart. In 1928/29, it became the School of Applied Arts and launched new divisions in stained-glass, ceramics, photography, and wrought-iron (others were added later). Its first Egyptian director was appointed in 1934. In 1941, it became the Higher School of Applied Arts, then the Royal School of Applied Arts in 1950, and finally, in 1953, it was elevated to a College of Applied Arts. In 1957, it became a co-educational institution. In 1968/69, the college began accepting post-graduate students for MA and Ph.D. degrees. When Hulwan University was created in 1975, the College of Applied Arts became part of it.[87]

The Leonardo da Vinci School of Arts was founded by the Italian Society of Dante Allighieri in 1898 to train assistants for architects. It later expanded into a department for painting and decoration. At its inception, most of the students were foreigners, though the ratio of Egyptians eventually

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[86]Hussein, Op.cit., p.35.
[87]Iskandar, Mallakh, Sharouni, Op.cit., pp.59-65

increased to 90 percent. The majority of the students who enrolled at the Leonardo da Vinci School had been rejected by the College of Fine Arts for one reason or another. A number of students from Egypt and the Arab world who later became established artists were among the rejected group. In 1976, the cultural agreement between Italy and Egypt was terminated and the school closed down.[88]

When Prince Yusuf Kamal inaugurated the School of Fine Arts in 1908, its instructors were all foreigners. Laplagne was its director and sculpture teacher; Fourschella, Juan Antes and Bonot taught painting; Colonne taught decoration; and Peron was the architecture teacher. Under their tutelage, young Egyptians were instructed in the principles and application of Western art. In 1909, the Prince created a trust fund for a new building and scholarships for outstanding students to study abroad. The first exhibition of Egyptian artists took place in 1911. It displayed the architectural designs, paintings and sculptures of students at the School of Fine Arts. Among the exhibiting artists were Youssef Kamel, Raghib Ayyad and Ali Hassan. By 1928, all its faculty members were local artists. In 1941, it became the Higher School of Fine Arts and, in 1950, it was elevated to the Royal College of Fine Arts. In 1952, the year of Egypt's Revolution, it was once again renamed, this time as the College of Fine Arts. In 1961, it became the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and was incorporated into Hulwan University in 1975.[89]

The Atelier of Fine Arts was created by the Ministry of Education in 1941 for the outstanding graduates of the Higher School of Fine Arts. The school nominated exceptional students who would join the Atelier for two

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[88]Ibid, pp.140-41.

[89]Hussein, Op.cit., p.33, Iskandar, Mallakh, Sharouni, Op.cit., pp.15-7.

years, receiving a monthly stipend of 12 Egyptian pounds to continue with their research in art unrestricted. At the end of the two-year period, each student would present his papers and art work, which would be displayed in a special exhibition. In winter, the artists were taken to a studio in Luxor where they worked amid the Pharaonic monuments; in summer, they returned to a studio situated in an Islamic house in the heart of old Cairo. The Atelier was Egypt's first attempt at creating post graduate studies in art. Unfortunately, the government did not raise the monthly stipend and, by 1967, only one member was left at the Atelier. It had to close down soon thereafter.[90]

While art classes were taught at government schools, the art program was unbalanced. It tried to instruct the students in the elements of drawing rather than providing them with a well-rounded art education. However, a few dedicated teachers introduced basic pedagogical theories into their classes.[91] As the number of trained artists appointed as teachers in the Ministry of Education increased, the standard of the art classes improved. The Ministry of Education began to hold annual exhibitions for students in Cairo and the various muḥāfaḍāt throughout the country. The most important exhibition is held in the capital on the anniversary of the revolution and it incorporates students from all over Egypt.[92]

The Higher Institute of Fine Arts for Female Teachers was the first art academy for girls. It was established by the government in 1939 under the directorship of the painter Zainab ᶜAbdu (b.1906). In 1947, it became a co-educational Higher Institute for Art Teachers and, in 1970, it was

[90]Iskandar, Mallakh, Sharouni, Op.cit., pp.47-8.
[91]Karnouk, Op.cit., p.43.
[92]Iskandar, Mallakh, Sharouni, Op.cit., pp.100-1.

transformed into the College of Art Education. In the early 1950s, Hamed Said established the School for Artistic Studies. He persuaded young art graduates, who were interested in studying nature and analytically recording monuments and other subjects, to teach at his college.[93]

In 1957, a new, full-fledged College of Fine Arts, with departments in painting, sculpture, decoration, graphics, and architecture, was established in Alexandria. Its dean, the sculptor Ahmed Osman, employed many prominent local artists such as Seif and Adham Wanli and Hamid Nada as faculty members.[94] In the 1980s, the government founded new art training institutions in areas outside Cairo and Alexandria and in 1982, the Ministry of Higher Education established an art college in Minia, a provincial city south of the capital.[95]

The first student to be sent abroad on scholarship was Mahmoud Mukhtar in 1911, as we have already seen. As soon as he graduated from the School of Fine Arts, he was sent by Prince Yusuf Kamal to the École des Beaux Arts in Paris. In 1912, the painter Ali Ahwani travelled to Paris on his own, while Yousuf Kamal and Raghib Ayyad made their way to Rome. The Egyptian government has been regularly sending artists to train at Western academies since 1917. Many were sent to study at art institutions in the former Eastern Bloc as well as the West, following the 1952 Revolution. Upon their return, the graduates were absorbed as teachers into Egypt's various art colleges and institutes.[96]

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[93]Hussein, Op.cit., pp.34-5.
[94]Ibid, p.35, Iskandar, Mallakh, Sharouni, Op.cit., p.88.
[95]Hussein, Op.cit., p.35.
[96]Ibid, pp.35-6.

Art Societies.

Art societies have played a crucial role in the advancement of Egyptian modern art. The Society of Fine Arts became the first art association established in Egypt (1918). Mahmoud Mukhtar, Raghib Ayyad, Youssef Kamel, Mahmoud Said, Ahmad Sabri, Muhammad Nagy, were some of its members, as were a few resident foreign artists such as Martin. They held the first successful exhibition to include works by native and foreign artists in 1919. One year later, their second and last exhibition took place, which included five Egyptian women artists among the 55 participants.[97]

In 1920, Fuad Abdul Malik, an important and active patron of the arts, created the House of Arts and Crafts in Cairo to promote the fine arts. Its secretary was Raghib Ayyad. It held its first exhibition in 1922 under the title *Salon du Caire*, in which 27 local and 15 foreign artists participated. The Salon du Caire has since become a yearly event. In 1923, Abdul Malik founded the Society of Art Lovers with the express goal of promoting painting, sculpture, drawing, architecture and crafts. This group also sought to cultivate, through lectures and exhibitions, artistic taste among the public. Prince Yusuf Kamal presided over its body of more than 20 Egyptian and foreign art patrons, as well as a committee of women artists, headed by the painter-sculptor Princess Samīḥa Ḥussein. In 1923, the Society of Art Lovers held the second Salon du Caire which included 93 painters and sculptors. In 1925, the government allocated an annual budget to buy works of art as well as a yearly subsidy for the Society. In 1927, the Society rented a mansion where it held its annual exhibitions which by then had become the most important artistic event in Egypt. By 1938, 122 local artists participated in

[97]Iskandar, Mallakh, Sharouni, Op.cit., p.108.

the salon while the number of foreign artists remained relatively constant. The Society of Art Lovers has continued its activities until the present. Besides the annual Salon du Caire, it has organized countless group and one-person exhibitions for photography and applied and fine arts by local and foreign artists, as well as book and children's exhibitions. The Society has also assisted artists in participating in international exhibitions such as *Egypt-France* which took place at the Louvre Museum in 1949. It has also been instrumental in raising art awareness among the public through its programme of lectures, publications, scholarships and prizes for talented artists in all fields.[98]

In 1927, a new group was established by a number of pioneer artists from Mahmoud Mukhtar's circle. La Chimère's members included Mahmoud Said, Raghib Ayyad, and Muhammad Nagy, and held its first exhibition in 1928. The group's aim was to break free from blindly copying nature and be innovative with an individual interpretation in a work of art. When Mukhtar left to prepare for his Paris exhibition in 1930, the group members, most of whom were studying abroad, dispersed meeting again at the Salon du Caire.[99]

A new group consisting of graduates of the Teachers Training School was founded in the interim. The Society of Artistic Propaganda was headed by the pedagogue-painter Habib Gorgi (1892-1965). Its professed aim was to paint directly from nature, spread art awareness among the public, and rid the Egyptian art movement of foreign influences. One of the important accomplishments of the Group was the publication of the book *The Aim of the Modern Artist,* (Ghāyat al-rassām al-ʿaṣrī) by Ramsis Younan in 1937. It

[98]Ibid, pp.108-10.
[99]Ibid, p.113.

contained the theoretical underpinning background of the modern trends mentioned in the goals of the Society of Artistic Propaganda.[100]

In the 1930s, several of the artistic groups that were founded did not survive for lack of funds. Among these was the Egyptian Academy of Fine Arts (1933) started by Muhammad Sidki Gabakhangi, which held the first exhibition of purely Egyptian artists. Other short-lived groups included the Essaistes (1934) which published an art journal in French called *Un Effort*; the Association of Egyptian Artists (1936); the New Orientalists (1937); and the Palette Group (1940).[101]

Egyptian artists went through a turbulent period between 1935 and 1945. They were caught between the events of World War II and internal political breakdown at home. The new avant-garde groups which were formed rejected the teachings of the Society of the Friends of Art, labelling them as sterile and academic. One such group was Art for Freedom, led by George Hunein. Its foundation was a reaction against Fascist attitudes towards Western artists such as Paul Klee, Max Ernst, Oscar Kokoschka, and the closure of the Bauhaus School by the Nazis. Its members published a manifesto entitled, *For a Revolutionary Independent Art*, whose 37 signatories condemned the oppressive Nazi measures taken against freedom of expression. The manifesto also emphasized the necessity of individual creativity as a great revolutionary force. Among the artists who participated in the Art and Freedom exhibition of 1940 were Mahmoud Said and Ramsis Younan. Through the group's exhibitions, which lasted from 1939 until 1945, new artistic trends such Surrealism, Cubism and Abstraction were introduced into Egypt for the first time. They were met with opposition and

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[100]Ibid, p.113.
[101]Ibid, pp.114-19.

even sarcasm by the public. However, the members were able to emphasize the importance of individuality in artistic styles and usher in a new period of unconventional artistic experimentation. The group dispersed by 1947. Its main figures, Ramsis Younan and Kamil Tilmissani, left Egypt, while Fouad Kamil founded a new group known as Automatic Art.[102]

In 1944, Hussein Youssef Amin (b.1906) founded the Group of Contemporary Art. Amin was a caring teacher who followed the progress of his students from secondary school through college. He concentrated on young people outside the established cultural mainstream and encouraged them to create instinctive works, far from Eastern or Western artistic efficacies. Amin believed that the artistic output of a nation gave it its character, provided it was executed by simple folk people from modest backgrounds, who were only 'restricted' by their own backwardness. Their work could transmit a revolutionary aesthetic and carry a message with deep social undertones. When an exhibition of Amin's students opened the same year, it engendered a cultural and political reaction, both negative and positive. Artists such as Kamel Tilmissani, Kamal Mallakh (1919-1986), Samir Rafii (b.1924), Maher Raif (b.1924), Hamid Nada (1924-1990), and Abdul Hadi Gazzar (1925-1965) were members of the Group of Contemporary Art. Like their chief mentor, they embarked on a search for Egyptian traditions and applied folk signs mixed with popular philosophy in order to counter Orientalist and imported trends. The group became the symbol of a rejectionist movement against the prevailing trend of superficiality and shallow romanticism in art. It continued as a rejectionist movement up to the 1952 Revolution.[103]

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[102] Ibid, pp.120-4, Hussein, Op.cit., p.34.
[103]Hussein, Op.cit., p.37.

In 1946, a new group called Art and Life, led by Hamid Said and his students, was formed at the Teachers Training Institute. It refuted Western academic teachings as well as modern European art, and adopted a philosophy based on contemplation of natural law and respect for ancient national artistic traditions. Art and Life tried to foster a collective artistic style instead of individualistic expressions, believing that Ancient Egyptian art was itself a collective effort. Art and Life held seven exhibitions in London and Egypt and took part in the 1956 Venice Biennale. It was acclaimed by the critic Herbert Reed for its unity of purpose and sincerity of expression.[104]

The Atelier Group was formed in Alexandria in 1932 by Muhammad Nagy and three foreign artists (Thorn, Sebati and Richard). It had a branch in Cairo and held several exhibitions, including the Alexandria Salon, the Swiss and Belgian art exhibitions, and a number of one-person shows. The Atelier's hall has become one of the most important art venues in Alexandria.[105]

The Revolution of 1952 produced fundamental changes in the social structure of Egyptian society. It put an end to the monarchy and the old affluent segment of society that had patronized art throughout the first half of the 20th century. The new regime consisted of army officers who lacked any artistic interests. They nationalized all private enterprise and companies, limited land ownership, and confiscated the property of the rich, leaving some families destitute overnight. The budget that had been allocated by the government since 1925, to purchase works of art was cut off in1954/55. When funds were once again resumed after the new regime realized the

[104]Iskandar, Mallakh, Sharouni, Op.cit., p.128.
[105]Ibid, p.83.

importance of artistic development in the country, the budget was greatly reduced. After the Revolution, all political parties were dissolved and a law was promulgated that allowed the authorities to arrest any gathering of more than five people. The previous art groups disintegrated and no others were created in the 1950s. The only group that survived was Art and Life because it did not sponsor exhibitions or other activities. It was a closed society whose members worked on their own until some left to work abroad and it finally stopped functioning. A law allowing the formation of associations and unions was eventually legislated. It encouraged artists to regroup under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture.[106] A number of closed societies was established in the 1960s but did not last long. Most of their members were young artists who wanted to establish themselves by working within groups of limited membership. Among them were the Group of Five Artists (1962), the Group of Experimentalists which was formed in the mid-1960s, and the Group of Art and Man. The latter two were based in Alexandria and had only three members each.[107]

In 1981, a number of Alexandrian artists formed the Axis Group. Its aim was to work collectively while each member maintained his/her individuality of expression. Having been founded at a time when artists were working in isolation from each other due to the political situation in the country, the Axis Group tried to compose an art circle open to new members, where contact among them would breed intellectual and artistic exchange.[108] Other art societies were the National Society of Fine Arts and the Association of Arts and Crafts. However, the largest and most active association of

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[106]Ibid, pp.129-30.
[107]Ibid, pp.149-52.
[108]Ibid, p.153.

artists continues to be the Union of Egyptian Plastic Artists, which was founded in 1978. Its members include all Egyptian painters and sculptors. Its most outstanding accomplishment was obtaining an income tax exemption for all the members in 1980. A similar Union of Designers of Applied Arts was formed in 1980.[109]

Official Patronage.

Since the 1920s, the state has played an important role in developing the modern art movement in Egypt. In 1924, the Exhibition of Contemporary Art was opened under the patronage of King Fuad, giving the movement a fresh incentive. Muhammad Mahmoud Khalil, president of the Society of Art Lovers, started collecting works from the Salon du Caire on behalf of the Ministry of Education in 1925. Later acquisitions extended to purchases from Parisian exhibitions. In 1927/28, the Ministry paid almost one thousand pounds (E.P.931,500), an astronomical figure at the time, to acquire works of art from Egypt and abroad. The Egyptian Parliament simultaneously legislated to guarantee artists their freedom of expression and bestow on the arts official protection. One bill recommended special attention for the visual arts and, in 1927, Parliament legislated to approve the establishment of the Museum of Modern Art which opened in 1931. A committee was formed to acquire a collection of paintings and sculptures by Egyptian and modern European artists. The foreign works in the collection were mainly impressionist and post-impressionist, and included paintings by Monet, Manet and Rodin. In 1935, the Museum published its first catalogue, a volume of 224 pages.[110] In 1963, the Museum was closed down, then

[109]Hussein, Op.cit., pp.34-5, Iskandar, Mallakh, Sharouni, Op.cit., p.159.
[110]Hussein, Op.cit., p.36.

demolished so that a modern hotel could be built on the site. Contemporary Egyptian works from the collection were temporarily removed to a private villa, while the works of Italian, French, Dutch and English artists were housed in the Gezira Museum. Most of this art work has since either been misplaced or lost, drastically reducing the breadth of the collection. Some works were hung in the offices of high-level officials in the Ministry of Culture, the headquarters of the Arab Socialist Union (the official ruling party at the time), and the Parliament. Most of this art disappeared without a trace. The theft of a painting by Rubens from the Gezira Museum in 1967, finally forced the authorities to value the 19th-century European masterpieces they owned. Gamal Abdul Nassir reacted by ordering the construction of a seven-story Palace of Arts on the grounds of Muhammad Mahmoud Khalil's museum. The Palace of Arts would house, among other facilities, several permanent exhibitions and ateliers in a proper arts complex. However, only three stories were completed by the time Abdul Nassir died; Anwar Sadat took over the project and converted it into a presidential palace.[111]

In the meantime, Muhammad Mahmoud Khalil's collection was reduced from 304 international paintings and sculptures to 233 pieces. After he and his wife died, in 1955 and 1962 respectively, the Ministry of Culture took over his house and opened it to the public. His collection consisted of works by Rodin, Van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec, Sisley, Renoir, Pissaro, Monet, Manet, Ingres, Gauguin, Delacroix, Degas, Daumier, Corot, and others. It was transferred to the confiscated former palace of Prince Amr Ibrahim. When the only work by Van Gogh, *The Poppy Flower*, was stolen in 1977, the authorities finally became aware of the importance of Khalil's

[111]Iskandar, Mallakh, Sharouni, Op.cit., pp.167-73.

collection. After the work was recovered following an intensive media campaign, the collection was insured and properly displayed.[112] In 1984, the authorities put the collection in the care of the National Centre for the Arts. A 2.5 million pound museum has recently been inaugurated at the National Cultural Centre (the new Opera complex) to house the entire Egyptian contemporary collection.[113]

Approximately 30 private and government owned museums operate in Egypt, mainly in Cairo and Alexandria today. The Municipal Museum of Alexandria hosts the Alexandria Biennale for Mediterranean countries. The National Centre for the Arts, built by the Japanese government in the capital, hosts the newly-created Cairo Biennale in its modern exhibition halls as well as foreign and local exhibitions held on regular basis. Other venues for art shows include: the Nile Exhibition Hall, which is the largest in the country; the Arts Centres of Zamalek and Gezira; and the Muhammad Mahmoud Khalil Museum. All the governorates in Egypt accommodate exhibition halls included in the state-built Palaces of People's Culture, where artists residing in the vicinity have an opportunity to display their work.[114]

Artistic Trends in Modern Egyptian Art.

The pioneers of modern Egyptian art were mostly graduates of the privately owned School of Fine Arts, which opened in 1908. Their work reflected the national spirit of the time. Mahmoud Mukhtar and Raghib Ayyad represented the struggle of their nation against colonialism by drawing

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[112]In a meeting with a high official in the Egyptian Minister of Culture, (February 1988) he told me that many of the works by international artists could be fakes that had replaced the originals which were secretly sold abroad.

[113]Iskandar, Mallakh, Sharouni, Op.cit., p.175-76.

[114]Hussein, Op.cit., p.36.

on the ancient traditions in painting and sculpture and linking them to Western art styles. The two former artists, along with Mahmoud Said, managed to free their work from the European academic school and to pave the way for a national Egyptian school of art. The art periodicals and reviews that began to appear at the time provided a forum for debate among intellectuals on the issue of whether Egypt was Pharaonic or Arab in nature, with champions of each group relying heavily on their cultural heritage. In 1937, Kamel Tilmissani published a statement entitled *Declaration of the Post-Orientalists* which dealt with the state of the arts in Egypt thus far, called for a break with the influence of foreign artists, and the need to cultivate a unique Egyptian artistic identity. This declaration coincided with the end of the British Mandate in 1936 and the demand for free elections and an independent parliament. Between 1938 and 1946, Fouad Kamel (1919-1971), Ramsis Younan (1909-1967) and Tilmissani departed from the then-dominant, direct figurative trend and embraced Surrealism, a style which they maintained until 1955.[115]

When the Revolution took place in 1952, Egyptian artists found themselves living in a new political atmosphere. They expressed their newly-found freedom espousing the slogans of the Revolution which supported the same ideals that some had been trying to propagate earlier. A new group of artists appeared that portrayed Egyptian nationalism through symbolism. They hailed their country's independence from foreign rule, nepotism and the end of a privileged aristocratic class. Egyptian peasantry, which had always been featured in modern Egyptian art, was glorified along with manual labourers and other segments of the lower classes. Popular ceremonies, market-places, and folk traditions among the poor were depicted

[115]Ibid, pp.36-7.

in an effort to replace European aesthetics. These works were met with official and popular appreciation which encouraged artists in their efforts to bestow on art a local character. However, despite the numerous attempts to develop indigenous artistic trends, ideas about reviving cultural heritage remained vague until 1958. On the other hand, the issue of international art and modernization had just started to spread in the artistic milieu. The path that artists would follow became clearer after 1958.[116] The nationalization of the Suez Canal by Gamal Abdul Nassir, followed by the Tripartite Aggression, fortified feelings of nationalism among all Egyptians, including artists. The new trend was based on the philosophy of Pan-Arabism which was popularized by Abdul Nassir's attempts to create Arab unity under his leadership. The idea of combining heritage with modernity evolved in the form of a quest for an Arab national artistic identity, completely free of all kinds of imported artistic influences. One group of artists referred to Egyptian rural life, in which they found a continuity of religious and folk traditions.[117] Among them were pioneer artists such as Mahmoud Said, Raghib Ayyad and Said Sadr. In fact, this group continued what their forerunners had already begun.

A second group of artists drew on ancient Egyptian artistic traditions to assert a national artistic identity. Once more the continuity between them and the previous generations was unmistakable. A third group of artists resorted to their Islamic heritage and set out to revive the aesthetics of Islamic art. The outcome of this trend was the formation of geometric abstraction inspired by arabesque designs and calligraphic art based on classical Arabic calligraphy. A parallel trend that fostered internationalism

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[116]Ibid, p.38.
[117]Ibid. p.38.

of art and followed known Western styles ranging from Impressionism to Expressionism, Abstraction and Pop Art, flourished until the early 1970s. The most effective artists among this group were the Alexandria Experimental Group, headed by Seif Wanli (1906-1979)[118] who was a daring and prolific artist willing to pursue the latest trends in the West.

After the country's defeat in the 1967 Six-Day war with Israel, Egypt's art movement suffered an era of stagnation. This lasted until 1973 when a period of intense artistic activity began with Anwar Sadat's new open-door policy. The number of exhibition halls increased throughout Egypt and foreign cultural centres were re-activated. The Cairo Biennale was inaugurated in 1982 along the model of its Alexandrian sister, and the new National Centre for the Arts, including an opera house was opened.

[118]Ibid, pp.38-9.

Chapter 4.

Lebanon.

Lebanon was one of the first Arab countries to adopt Western art forms and aesthetics. Much like their early Turkish counterparts, Lebanese artists were directly exposed to European art styles through their training in European academies and at the studios of established Western artists.

By the beginning of the 17th century, Mīr Fakhr-al-dīn II, a local potentate, ruled the whole of Ottoman Lebanon, including the sanjaqs of Beirut, Sidon and Tripoli, as well as Baalback, Biqaʿ, Safad, Tiberius, and Nazareth.[119] In 1613, he visited the Medici Court in Florence and was impressed by its Renaissance art and architecture, and he brought back Italian architects and artisans to build him a Venetian style palace in Beirut. Upon his return to Lebanon, he decided to open his country to the mainstream of Western civilization by ruling according to contemporary Western methods and launching an open-door policy towards Europe. His rule marked the beginning of a new era, particularly along the Lebanese coast.[120]

Lebanon under Ottoman rule was divided into different administrative districts of which Mount Lebanon was one. It formed an inaccessible range of snow clad mountains, deep valleys, and rivers that over-looked the narrow coastal plain. This region rétained a strong sense of individuality under its feudal and religious system. Early currents of Westernization penetrated the mountainous region of Lebanon at the hands of European missionaries. They

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[119]P.Hitti, History of the Arabs, p.729.

[120]J. Carswell, "The Lebanese View", Lebanon - The Artist's View, p.16.

opened convents and missionary schools and introduced the printing-press into the region. Western painting and, to a lesser extent, sculpture were taught by these missionaries. They established the basis for a cultural, social and political life that revolved around a religious axis, which led to the emergence of an intellectual and artistic awakening. Through the church, Gothic style became popular in 18th-century Lebanon and eventually gave birth to a local Gothic school in religious painting. It was an art of icons and simple religious scenes with a hierarchic flavour, distinguished by its accurate lines and lifelike colours. Works of art in this style filled the halls and corridors of numerous churches and convents in mountain towns and villages.[121]

By the 18th century, imported art from Italy and Austria began to leave an impact on local talent. Orientalists like David Roberts, William Bartlett, Horace Vernet, Sir David Wilkie, Edward Lear, Carl Haag and Amadeo Preziosi among many others, visited Beirut and the Lebanese coast where they recorded landscapes, ruins, and monuments in minute details. They were fascinated by the local customs, especially people in national costumes participating in popular celebrations. As a result of this influx of Orientalist artists, a new school of art began in Beirut. [122]

Lebanon had experienced a period of prosperity since the 17th century under an affluent merchant class who patronized the arts. The ports of Lebanon, Tripoli, Beirut, Tyre, and Sidon, also became the gates to Syria and Palestine. For the first time, not only pilgrims but tourists started coming to the Levant in such numbers that they prompted the opening of the first hotel

[121]E. Lahoud, Contemporary Art in Lebanon, p.XXIX.
[122]Ibid, p.XXX1.

in the Middle East, Grand Hotel Bassoul, in Beirut. Trade with Europe continued to flourish, ushering in economic prosperity. Around 1812, many schools were opened in the mountains and along the coastline by Catholic, Protestant and Greek Orthodox missionaries from Europe and the United States. Among them was the first girls' school, founded in Beirut by the wife of an American missionary in 1834. During the same year the Americans established a printing press in Beirut; the Jesuits founded another in 1846. The seeds for two institutions of higher education were sown by the Americans and French. The Syrian Protestant College, later known as the American University of Beirut, opened in 1866. The second university was established by the Jesuits who moved their seminary to Beirut in 1875, marking the commencement of the University of St. Joseph. Secular education was simultaneously introduced into the region and began to compete with the old monastic system. [123]

Development of Painting.

The earliest reference to painting in the Lebanese mountain region dates back to 1587. Built by Father Antone Gemayel, the Church of Mar 'Abda in Bekfayya, contained murals by Ilias al-Hasrouni, which demonstrates the early impulse in Lebanon in iconographic mural painting. A second and later painting referred to al-Shammas Abdullah al-Zakher (1684-1748) of the Shuwairi order, is a self-portrait in Gothic style.[124] Besides this scanty information on these two artists, no particulars have reached us on the art movement in Lebanon during the 16th, 17th, and 18th

[123]Lebanon - The Artist's View, chronology.
[124]A. Bafnassi, Ruwwād al-fann al-ḥadīth fī'l-bilād al-ʿarabīyah, p.95.

centuries, presumably because very little was being done, and that was mainly confined to church circles.

The earliest Lebanese painters, whose works are known, date from the first half of the 19th century. The oldest of this group was Moussa Dib (died 1826) who, in 1777, became head of the Convent of Our Lady of the Fields (Deir Sayïdat al-Ḥaqla) succeeding his uncle Butros Dib. Due to internal clerical intrigue he was dismissed from his post in 1816, which he recovered two years later and at which he remained until his death. Most of his work, found in different churches and convents, consists of portraits of church patriarches and religious scenes (fig. 23).[125]

Kenaan Dib (died 1873) was a nephew and pupil of Moussa Dib. Though he trained with his uncle, he was mostly influenced by the Italian artist, Constantin Giusti, who came to Beirut with the Jesuits in 1831. Throughout his life, Giusti remained closely connected with the Jesuit Order in Lebanon, Syria and Palestine. Like his uncle, Kenaan was a prolific religious painter whose works still decorate numerous churches, convents and monasteries in Lebanon (fig. 24). Otherwise little is known about him.[126] Youssef Estephan (c. 1800) who could have been an artist, layman, or priest, is known only through his work at the Convent of Mar Youhanna Hrach. Apart from this scattered information, little documentation on artists living in the first half of the 19th century exists.[127]

It is obvious that the earliest Lebanese painters were Christian artists. The aesthetic environment was confined to Church circles where the

[125]Lebanon - The Artist's View, pp.109-110.
[126]Ibid, p.107.
[127]Ibid, p.114.

depiction of religious themes and portraits of the clergy constituted the main repertoire.

The Marine School.

As subjects of the Ottoman Empire, a number of Arab and Lebanese youth went to Istanbul in the second half of the 19th century to pursue their studies in Turkish academies. Those who joined the military and naval academies adhered to the trends prevalent among Turkish soldier-painters which in turn influenced the Lebanese Marine School of painting. This influence was evident in the depiction of historical events and sea battles, in an exact and descriptive manner that crowded as many figures as possible into the compositions in order to emphasize the historical importance of the event represented. The inclusion of human figures in the landscape occurred in Lebanon earlier than in Turkey because of the former's religious pictorial tradition. The Marine School was distinguished by its scenes of the Lebanese coast with its beautiful setting, luminous atmosphere, historical events, and ships. Ibrahim Sarabiyye, celebrated for his masterpiece commemorating the arrival of Emperor Wilhelm II of Germany in Beirut was one of the well-known soldier-painters. Ali Jamal al-Beiruti who was a graduate naval officer of the War School in Istanbul where he settled and taught painting in government schools, was another. Others included Hassan Tannir, a young man from the Dimashqya family whose first name is unknown; Mohammad Said Mirʿi who later emigrated to the United States; Najeeb Bekhazi who emigrated to Russia; Mirlay Ibrahim al-Najjar a medical doctor with the Ottoman army and the most outstanding figure in this group; and Salim Haddad who later settled in Egypt where he became well-established (fig. 25); and Najeeb Fayyad. Another early pioneer was Ibrahim

Yaziji (1847-?), known for his improvements on the letters of the Arabic press. His importance for the arts lies in the exact drawings he made of his friends and relatives, both in colour and charcoal, of which some were rescued and kept at the National Library in Beirut. During this period, many families descended from the mountains to Beirut, seeking refuge from the conflicts raging between Druzes and Maronites which had started in 1843. This demographic shift benefitted American missionaries, schools, institutes and universities, especially those founded after 1834, which were desperately short of teachers with a perfect command of the Arabic language and its literature. Unfortunately, most works by artists of the second half of the 19th century have been lost. Those remaining indicate that these early pioneers were mostly amateurs, lacking academic training and technical skill. Only through raw talent, a keen sense of observation, and relentless dedication were they able to pursue a career in art. Raiif Shdoudi was the only exception to follow the principles of art during his rather short career.[128]

Photography.

By the mid-19th century, photography had already been introduced to Lebanon and even competed with topographical painting. One of the most famous photographic families in the Middle East was that of Felix Bonfils, his wife Lydia and son, Adrien, who settled in Beirut in 1877. They were indefatigable photographers whose numerous pictures of Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt provide a wealth of topographical, ethnic, religious, social, and incidental records of the area. Two Lebanese photographers - Sarrafian and Saboungi - also established themselves in Beirut. In the mountains, the Maronite Bishop Emmanuel Phares el-Ferkh used his own

[128]Lahoud, Op.cit., pp.XXXI-XXXIII.

photographs on fund-raising tours. Photography profoundly influenced the world of painting and a photographic way of seeing the world began to appear in the works of Lebanese painters by the turn of the century. This influence is noticeable in the paintings of Daoud Corm, Khalil Saleeby, and others be it in portraits or landscapes.[129]

The First Generation of Lebanese Artists.

The end of the 19th century ushered in an important era for Lebanese culture. Beirut was already an established bridge between East and West. It witnessed the birth of theatre, a public library, commercial printing, and local newspapers, including an art journal. Furthermore, the establishment of universities brought an increase of Western influences to the cultural and artistic life of the city. The early pioneers of Lebanese modern art worked at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. Most of them travelled to European cities like Brussels, Rome, London and Paris to train in art and to gain first-hand knowledge of classical and contemporary Western trends by visiting museums and the studios of individual artists. Daoud Corm, Habib Srour, Niʿmatallah Maadi, Philippe Mourani, and Khaleel Saleeby were among these artists.

Daoud Corm (1852-1930) came from the mountains of Lebanon and in 1870, he went to Rome and enrolled at the Institute of Fine Arts where he trained under Roberto Bompiani, the official Italian Court Painter. During his five years in Rome, Corm studied the works of Renaissance artists and was influenced by Raphael, Michelangelo and Titian, whose styles he assimilated in his paintings. He gained official recognition when he was commissioned to paint the portrait of Pope Pius IX, and later became one of

[129]Carswell, Op.cit., p.17.

the official painters attached to the Belgian Court of King Leopold II. Upon his return to Lebanon, many distinguished personalities in the Levant and Egypt asked him to paint their portraits. He made a portrait of Khedive Abbas II of Egypt in 1894 and left a wealth of religious paintings in churches in Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Palestine, as well as training a number of aspiring young artists, including Habib Srour and Khalil Saleeby.[130] Corm who was known as a religious painter, freed Lebanese art of its previous narrow, amateurish tradition and led it to the wide perspectives of the great classical masters, thus marking an important step in the history of modern art in Lebanon. His portraits remain a gold mine of information about the national costumes worn at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries (fig. 26). His religious paintings point to delicate feelings and a deep faith, after the manner of Leonardo da Vinci and the Italian Renaissance painters. They illustrate his view of the human body which he considered the essence of beauty, devoid of sensuality and voluptuousness.[131]

At the age of ten, Habib Srour (1860-1938) moved to Rome with his parents where later on he studied at the Institute of Fine Arts. In 1890, he returned to Beirut after a long stay in Egypt. In Beirut, he taught painting at the Imperial Ottoman School of Bashoura and in his own studio, which he opened the year of his arrival. Like his peers, he most often made portraits of important Arab and Ottoman social, religious, political and literary figures, along with delicate still-lifes and landscapes of Lebanon.[132] Srour's realistic landscapes and still-lifes, done in the Renaissance style, show an

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[130]Lebanon - The Artist's View, p.101.
[131]Lahoud, Op.cit., pp.1-2.
[132]Lebanon - The Artist's View, pp.161-62.

accomplished technique in the depiction of forms and use of colour. He was a skilled pedagogue who trained many artists of the following generation.

Philippe Mourani (1875-1973) was seventeen years old when he travelled to Rome to train under Bertone. In 1901, he went to Paris and studied under Jean-Paul Laurens, participating in several salons and exhibitions. In Lebanon, he designed postage stamps and Arabic characters for printing suitable for use in the West, contributed illustrations to several French periodicals and he also planned the Phoenician Hall in the 1901 Paris Fair.[133] Mourani was an accomplished portrait painter and did landscapes and genre scenes in the Orientalist manner (fig. 27).

Khalil Saleeby (1870-1928) started to draw at an early age by using the heads of matches. In 1886, he enrolled at the Syrian Protestant College which later became the American University of Beirut. In 1890, he left to further his art training in Edinburgh where he met the American painter John Singer Sargent who advised him to go to the United States. In America, he married a young lady from Philadelphia and then returned to live, first in Edinburgh where one of his paintings won the gold medal at the Edinburgh Salon of 1889, and then in London. After living in England, Saleeby went to Paris and became a pupil of Puvis de Chavannes. He also met Pierre Auguste Renoir who greatly impressed him. In 1898, he returned briefly to London (for two years) and gained fame as a portrait painter. Saleeby returned to Lebanon in 1900 and taught art at AUB. He painted numerous portraits of friends, dignitaries and, most often, his wife. In 1920, he launched his own studio in Beirut where many aspiring young artists were trained, including César Gemayel and Omar Onsi. He is considered to be the father of the

[133]Ibid, p.143.

Lebanese artistic renaissance.[134] Saleeby was the only Lebanese painter of his time to rebel against popular genre and religious painting and fall under the impact of the Impressionists. Influenced by Reynolds and Sargent, he made graceful nudes and strong portraits which emphasized the character of his models. This bold, rebellious, and emancipated artist came to a sudden and brutal death when he was senselessly assassinated with his wife in Beirut in 1928.[135]

By contrast, most Lebanese artists, like their counterparts in Turkey at the end of the 19th century, were not affected by Impressionism which was so popular in France. In spite of their training in Rome and Paris and their exposure to Western art, they continued to maintain an academic style in their own work and instructed their pupils accordingly. Again, not unlike Turkey, the absence of a strong and widespread Western painting tradition in Lebanon did not provide artists with a basis for rejection or rebellion. Academic teaching in itself was new to them. Furthermore, art was mainly confined to places of worship and the limited circles of the ruling class, which gave artists a restricted public to satisfy.

Second Generation of Artists.

Without a transitional period, a second generation of modern artists appeared in Lebanon at the turn of the century. They were Yousef Hoyeck, Youssef Ghassoub and Khalil Gibran. Although these three artists were raised under various influences of Western art, they never suffered the loss of identity which was common among their contemporaries in other Arab countries. They managed to free themselves of the local genre of religious

[134]Ibid, pp.156-7.
[135]Lahoud, Op.cit., pp.17-8.

art and took advantage of the preceding generation's experience and Western training.

Youssef Hoyeck (1883-1962) spent twenty years learning drawing and sculpture in Rome and Paris where he trained under Henri Bourdelle and shared a studio with Gibran. He was influenced by Renaissance sculpture and Rodin's tormented figures. In 1932, he returned to Beirut and devoted himself to sculpting and teaching. Hoyeck is considered the father of modern sculpture in Lebanon, and was instrumental in training most artists of the following two generations.[136]

Gibran Khalil Gibran (1883-1931) is best known for his literary contributions in Arabic and English. A symbiotic relationship between Gibran's writing and paintings existed and manifested itself through a highly personalized mystical symbolism, independent of current art trends. Gibran trained and worked in Paris and Boston and spent most of his life outside Lebanon, therefore his contribution to Lebanese modern painting was minimal.

Unlike his colleagues whose initial training in art was in the West, Youssef Ghassoub (1898-1967) first trained with the father of Arab sculpture, the Egyptian Mahmoud Mukhtar. He eventually went to Paris and Rome in order to sharpen his technique. He left a wealth of sculptures executed in a naturalistic style throughout Palestine, Syria and Lebanon.[137]

The Pioneers of Modern Art.

With the end of World War I in 1918, Ottoman rule over Lebanon ended. In 1919, the French Mandate was established over the country and in

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[136]Lebanon - An Artist's View, p.128.
[137]Ibid, p.104.

1924 the mandate authorities made French and Arabic the official languages of Lebanon. In the same year, coeducation was officially introduced at the American University of Beirut.[138]

During this period, a most important generation of Lebanese artists appeared. Its leaders were Moustapha Farroukh, César Gemayel, Omar Onsi, Saliba Douaihy and Rachid Wehbi. They laid the foundation for modern art in Lebanon, and their impact continues until the present day. The work of these five pioneers manifested a spirit of freedom and originality, both in style and mode of expression, which had never materialized in the works of the two previous generations. From the very outset, their foundations were laid for them by their teachers Corm, Srour and Saleeby, who helped them gain self confidence and establish their artistic roots within the intimate atmosphere of their own national culture. This saved them the agitation and commotion that Western artists were experiencing, after the trauma of World War I.

Unlike their predecessors who had trained in the West, the initial art training of the modern pioneers took place in Lebanon. Moustapha Farroukh (1902-1957), Saliba Douaihy (b.1912) and Rachid Wehbi (b.1917) started their art lessons with Habib Srour, while Omar Onsi (1901-1969) and César Gemayel (1898-1958) trained with Khaleel Saleeby. Eventually, they all went to Rome and Paris. By then, religious subjects in the West had been replaced by genre paintings of national events and heroes. They were able to experience the new trends in art - Cubism, Dadaism, Fauvism - that were emerging in post-war Europe. Upon their return to Lebanon, they became instrumental in awakening a feeling of national pride in the recent history of their country and they translated the natural beauty of Lebanon from every

[138]Ibid, chronology (unpaginated).

angle. A wealth of carefully recorded documentation appeared in their detailed works of the coastline and mountain landscapes that included architecture, nature, and people posing in their national costumes and practicing their local customs (figs. 28, 29, 30). The only one of the five artists to later develop his work into abstraction was Douaihy. Even then, he chose an indigenous form such as the shalwar, the local trousers worn by mountain people, and turned it into an abstract motif (fig. 31).

This group of artists found that art was a luxury enjoyed behind the doors of churches and palaces, which only the clergy and the wealthy could afford. Having come from modest backgrounds, art was alien to their families. Faroukh's father was an illiterate man who repaired copper utensils; Wehbi's father was a poor school teacher, while Gemayel had to work on the construction of mountain roads to earn a living. Through the art classes they taught at schools such as La Sagesse and Maqassid,[139] they were able to transmit to their students both the training they had received at the studios of their predecessors, as well as new Western techniques and skills they had gained at European academies. Before their departure to the West, their training at the hands of the previous generation was instrumental in safeguarding their identity and maintaining their links with their culture and heritage. Simultaneously, they were able to improve their techniques and widen their horizons in the West. Through their dedication, hard work, and talent, they were able to introduce Lebanese modern art into the contemporary mainstream and popularize it by making it accessible to the masses. It was this third generation of artists which succeeded in laying the foundations of modern art and familiarizing the public with contemporary European modernistic trends. Through oils and watercolours, based on the

[139]Sagesse (al-Ḥikma) and Maqassid were the first schools opened in Beirut by Islamic societies.

impressionist and expressionist schools, and their choice of local subject matter, Farroukh, Douaihy, Wehbi, Onsi, and Gemayel formed a distinctive movement that might be called an early Lebanese style of art.

Beirut as an Art Centre.

In the 1930s, Beirut was fast becoming a cultural and artistic centre where artists and amateurs from Lebanon, France and other countries worked. Encouraged by the French Mandate authorities, a series of exhibitions was held to stress the cultural aspects of French policy. Regardless of the ulterior motives, these exhibitions created lively artistic activities. An exhibition at the Arts and Crafts School was held in 1931, in which Rachid Wehbi and César Gemayel, just back from Paris, took part. In 1933, the French painter George Cyr settled in Beirut and profoundly influenced many local painters among whom were Chafic Abboud, Elie Kanaan, Omar Onsi and Farid Awad. In 1934, an exhibition was organized by the newspaper *La Syrie* at the Saint-George Hotel, in which Habib Srour, Philippe Mourani, Moustapha Farroukh and Rachid Wehbi participated. In 1936, the Parliament building hosted yet another big exhibition. The Académie Libanaise des Beaux Arts opened in 1937. In 1939, Hoyeck and other Lebanese artists, exhibited their works in the Lebanese Pavilion at the International World Fair in New York. In 1940, the Association of Artists, Painters and Sculptors was founded.[140] Thus, Beirut's reputation as an Arab, francophile art centre was established during the 1930s.

[140]Lahoud, Op.cit., p.XXXIX-XL, Lebanon - The Artist's View, p.105 & chronology.

Art Education.

Training for early Lebanese artists had initially been acquired by joining a military school in Istanbul, and subsequently by studying under an established artist at home, or travelling abroad (mainly to Rome and Paris), to enroll in a foreign art institution. With the exception of Gibran, few artists, went to the United States for their art studies.

However, in 1937, Alexis Boutros founded the Académie Libanaise des Beaux Arts in Beirut. He employed French, Italian as well as Lebanese teachers including César Gemayel. Through the Académie, specialization in art became accessible to those who wanted it within Lebanon, although many still preferred to go abroad for their training.

After World War II, the United States emerged as a popular super-power in the Arab world and Arab youth looked up to America with its ideas of equality and democracy. American culture and art began to spread in those circles where French culture had once dominated.

In 1954, the American University of Beirut opened its Department of Fine Arts and two American artists were brought in. The most innovative contribution of this department was its art seminars which consisted of a programme of public lectures and demonstrations that was open to the public. This method of teaching had a profound impact on the art scene. Most importantly, no artistic prerequisites were necessary to join the seminars. Furthermore, the department disproved the myth that France alone had a monopoly on culture, thus exposing their students to more expansive artistic horizons.[141] In 1965, the Fine Arts Institute was established at the Lebanese University; Beirut College for Women (later Beirut University College),

[141]Carswell, Op.cit., pp.17-8.

founded in 1926 as the American Junior College for Women, already had a Fine Arts Department. Although formal art training began relatively late in Lebanon, by the 1960s, several art institutions in Beirut provided Lebanese students with a high level of artistic training and education.

Fourth Generation of Artists.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, Lebanese society, which in fact is Beirut society, has experienced a strong pull towards all aspects of Western culture. As Lebanon gained its independence in 1944, a fourth generation of Lebanese artists began to emerge. They had not experienced deprivation and demoralization from the war, unlike their European counterparts. Nevertheless, because of the widespread communications between Europe and Lebanon, many artists tried to share the experience of their Western peers by following the art movements that were in vogue at the time. It was a sad experience that unfortunately met with failure. The world those artists were trying to penetrate was foreign to them: it had different problems based on a view of reality which they could not relate to and for the first time they experienced a feeling of alienation between two worlds while belonging to none. The deluge of Western culture that engulfed Beirut by the 1950s, also contributed to this loss of identity. Most of the artists of the 1950s came from conservative mountain towns and villages. For decades, the only subjects taught in the mountains had been Arabic language, literature, and history, alongside religion and a smattering of science. When these young people came to Beirut, they were overwhelmed by Western philosophy, literature, science, culture, history, psychology, music, art, and theatre. They encountered new social codes and values, much different from those that they had been brought up with in their sheltered mountains. This

push and pull between the two cultures created in them a psychological and cultural dichotomy. Many university graduates were confronted with unemployment and lack of job opportunities, causing resentment and disappointment. Some eventually took up art as an easy escape from their frustrations, but the poor quality of their work affected the general artistic standard of the country.[142]

A number of these new artists embraced existentialism which had become popular in France; they took in Cubism, Surrealism or Abstraction, copying the forms without knowing much about the components of these styles or their underlying philosophies. Their work inevitably reflected a superficiality devoid of meaning or message or even the basic principles of art. As a result of this cultural and psychological disorientation, some artists such as Michel Murr (1930-1970) eventually came to a tragic end by committing suicide, while others succeeded in pulling themselves out of this dilemma and were able to regain their self-assurance.[143]

Not all artists of the fourth generation fall within this group. There were those who detached themselves and stayed out of their peers' turmoil, mainly due to the sound training they had received from the second and third generations of artists and from the Académie Libanaise.[144]

The main characteristic of this second group from the fourth generation of Lebanese artists was of study and research, which enabled a number of them to rediscover their identity and reaffirm their art by producing highly expressive and original works. Artists in Lebanon began to

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[142]Lahoud, Op.cit., p.XLI.
[143]Ibid, pp.XLI - XLII
[144]Ibid, p.XL.

dig into the past for inspiration out of a desire to confirm their artistic identity. Yet the works that they produced were free of imitation or repetition and were acclaimed both in their country and abroad. These works were characterized by three elements: a solid technique, inspiration drawn from rich cultural sources and arbitrary expression. Paradoxically, the West was attracted by the East, driven by a tendency to adopt and incorporate trends from other cultures. The East with its strong light and colours, arabesque motifs, and elegant calligraphy was discovered in Europe by artists like Paul Klee and Paul Franck, and many Lebanese artists in turn, became conscious of their artistic heritage through the works of their European peers.[145] Folk culture was the first source to which Lebanese artists such as Rafic Charaf reverted; it was followed by Arabic calligraphy. Mainly five artists in Lebanon included calligraphy in their repertoire of subject matter; they were Wajih Nahle, Rafik Charaf, Etel Adnan, Hassan Madi and Said Akl.[146]

Beirut as an Arab Art Centre.

In 1954, Unesco opened its regional headquarters in Beirut, earmarking its Congress Hall for grand art exhibitions.[147] In 1952, Nicholas I. Sursock, a descendant of an old Lebanese family, bequeathed his residence to the Beirut Municipality and transformed it into an art museum. The activities of the Musée Sursock included an annual salon of painting and sculpture that started in 1961, as well as international exhibitions from Lebanon and abroad which since have continuously been held. The first

[145]Lahoud, Op.cit., pp.XLII - XLIII.
[146]The five artists are discussed in chapters 16 and 17.
[147]According to Unesco Office in Amman, the regional headquarters were established in 1954 while Edouard Lahoud mentions the first exhibition held at Unesco in 1949.

Baalbeck festival opened in 1955, and thereafter became a yearly international cultural event, inviting world famous artists such as Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev to perform. During the same year Lebanese artists began to participate in the Alexandria Biennale. In 1957, a new Association of Lebanese Artists, Painters and Sculptors was founded. In 1959, Lebanese artists exhibited their work in the Paris Biennale for the first time.[148]

By the 1960s, Beirut had become the cultural centre of the Arab world. Artists from other Arab countries flocked to the Lebanese capital, either to train, exhibit their works or immerse themselves in the intellectual atmosphere of the city, with its Western undercurrents and freedom of expression (that was usually lacking in their native countries). Lebanese artists expressed their individuality through their work regardless of popular taste. Cultural activities consisted of exhibitions, lectures, seminars and book launchings. A number of commercial galleries prospered. Apart from the Arabic, English and French daily, weekly, and monthly periodicals, critics voiced their opinion through several art publications. The art public was quite enlightened and showed considerable enthusiasm in collecting works which led to a boom in the market and pushed artists to increase their output while maintaining high standards. They were encouraged by informed critics who were instrumental in educating the public. Even the existence of a pretentious group of Lebanese society helped the art boom with their buying power. Through exposure, many of the so-called Francophile upper class became interested in their country's artistic activities. A healthy circle of dynamic interaction developed between artist, critic, the public and the art dealer, in an atmosphere of complete intellectual freedom without any

[148]Lebanon - The Artist's View, chronology.

interference either from the State or from pressure groups. The art movement in Lebanon eventually interacted with other international art movements and contributed to Arab art by presenting audacious experiments carried out by seasoned artists.

The Civil War.

The Lebanese civil war which broke out in 1975, dealt a severe blow to one of the most flourishing modern art movements in the Arab and Islamic world. The disruption of all social, political and moral values brought the development of the arts to a complete standstill. The artistic values which had taken artists decades to build were destroyed overnight, leaving behind an aftertaste of despair and a sense of banality. The humiliation of the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon in 1978, and that of Beirut in 1982, the breakdown of the economic order, and the bloody and senseless, internal sectarian and political strife created near-impossible living conditions throughout the country. The prevalent state of lawlessness gave rise to terrorism and militia rule whose creed was 'might is right'; only the fittest were able to survive. Art patronage by the state, the affluent middle class and the intelligentsia ceased. Cultural and artistic activity suffered. Foreign cultural centres and commercial galleries closed down. Unesco moved its headquarters to Amman, and universities held classes sporadically, depending on the extent of the fighting and violence.

A considerable number of talented, recognized artists left the country to live abroad, mostly in Europe and the United States. Among them were Saliba Douaihy and Chafic Abboud who went to Paris. Those who remained behind had to make the difficult choice between keeping their artistic standards, starving, or succumbing to the prevalent vulgar taste in order to

sell their works and make a living. Two trends subsequently developed on the Lebanese art scene. The first and most common comprised of saleable decorative works that copied Islamic motifs and the old naturalistic styles of Onsi, Farroukh and Douaihy. These bland folkloric paintings, lacking any personal interpretation and innovation, almost replaced the former original expressiveness and individuality in style. The second trend was carried on by individual artists such as Amine Elbacha, Hussein Madi, Said Akl, Paul Guiragossian and Rafic Charaf who stayed in Beirut and continued to paint in isolation from the general public. Some drew on calligraphy and other traditional forms though they presented them through a novel perspective with new aesthetics, adding modern values to their heritage.[149] A number of artists had to travel to other capitals inside and outside the Arab world to exhibit their work. On the whole, the Lebanese art movement suffered a major setback. Nevertheless, judgement should be withheld. The cruel living conditions under which artists had to survive during the longest internal strife their country had ever witnessed could easily lead to a state of creative impotence.

The Musée Sursock was one of the few institutions that maintained its activities despite the turmoil. The annual salons took place, albeit rather irregularly. Unable to carry on its activities inside Lebanon, the Musée moved them abroad. In 1982, it organized an exhibition at Unesco Headquarters in Paris entitled *Le Livre et le Liban.* In 1984, it took an exhibition of Lebanese architecture to Paris and in 1986 it organized the

[149]S. Sayegh, "Thamānīnāt al-fann al-lubnānī wa'l-as'ila al-ṣa'ba ", Finoon Arabiah I (1981), pp.51-3.

exhibition *Romantic Lebanon* in Leighton House in London.[150] In 1989, the British Lebanese Association held an important panoramic exhibition of Lebanese art - *Lebanon - The artist's view, 200 years of Lebanese Painting* -, at the Barbican Centre in London. Only in 1991 did the Lebanese civil war come to an end. In the very short period of time since, cultural and artistic life started to pick up.

[150]Lebanon - The Artist's View, chronology.

Chapter 5.

Iraq.

Modern Western art did not start to develop in Iraq until the end of the 19th century after the bureaucratic reforms implemented by the Ottoman wālī Midhat Basha (1869-1872). These reforms included the founding of new cities for the settlement of Bedouin tribes, the erection of new buildings in Baghdad, the opening of the first modern school, printing press, newspaper, and hospital, and building a horse-drawn railway between Baghdad and Kadimiyya.[151] Meanwhile, Islamic architecture and crafts such as rug-weaving, jewelry, metalwork, woodwork, ceramics and tile-work were still practiced by local artists and artisans.

Mural Art and Painting in the 19th Century.[152]

Mural decorations which consisted of ceramic tiles and mural paintings were quite widespread in 19th-century Iraq. Ceramic tile-decorations, originally introduced from Iran and consisting of geometric and floral arabesque designs, were particularly used in tombs and mosques. The painted murals found in coffee-houses, shops and private homes (regardless of social class), were an extension of Turkish wall-painting which we have already discussed. They included pictures of birds perched on branches, ducks and horses. Mural painters were considered craftsmen rather than artists, although generally we know little or nothing about specific individuals. However, the name ʿAbbud, the Jewish Naqqash, is one of the

[151]S.H. Al Said, Fusūl min tarīkh al-ḥaraka al-tashkīlīya fi'l-ʿIrāq juzu' awwal, p.25.

[152]Mural decoration in the form of tiles and painting had a long history in Iraq going back to the Assyrians in 9th century B.C.

few known painters of the 19th century. This art form was practiced until the end of the last century, and went out of fashion after photography became popular and easel painting was introduced.[153]

Painting on glass was another pictorial art form popular in Iraq in the 19th century. It was probably introduced by the Ottomans who picked it up after conquering Bohemia and the Balkan states. The subjects painted on glass were illustrations taken from folk tales and were executed in a naïve style with the use of bright primary colours.[154]

The earliest Iraqi painter mentioned in the 19th century was Niazi Mawlawi Baghdadi. He was a calligrapher, painter and decorator, of whom little is known, although the works he left behind give an indication of his background. His refined drawings in miniature style kept at the National Library in Baghdad, indicate Persian influences, while his use of three dimensions reveals a clearly Western aesthetic. In spite of the strict rules he followed in his calligraphic pieces, Baghdadi displayed modern graphic tendencies by utilizing the spatial and plastic qualities of Arabic letters which could be considered one of the earliest experiments in op-art (fig. 32). He was a ṣūfī of the Mawlawi order[155] and an artist ahead of his time. His precise drawings demonstrate a great mastery of technique, and his calligraphic experiments indicate a bold vision which was only probed by other Iraqi and Arab artists in the second half of the 20th century.

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[153]Al Said, Op.cit., pp.43-5.
[154]Ibid, p.45.
[155]Ibid, pp.45-51.

Beginnings of Western Art.

Between the end of Ottoman rule in 1917 and the establishment of the Hashemite monarchy in 1921, Iraq was controlled by the British who had made it part of their mandate from the end of World War I until 1932. In this period, they introduced several reforms in the country. In 1919, they opened eight secondary schools in the capital and by 1920, there were twenty daily papers and six periodicals published in Baghdad. Subsequently, a cultural and political consciousness began to develop among the people, and literature and music witnessed a revival and traditional crafts thrived, although painting remained somewhat stagnant.[156]

Easel painting in oils was begun in Iraq at the turn of the century by a group of officers who had received their training at military schools in Istanbul. They formed the nucleus for the development of Iraqi modern art. The most important figure among this group was Abdul Qadir al-Rassam (1882-1952). Al-Rassam had trained at the Turkish Military Academy and painted in the same naïve manner as the Turkish soldier-painters, executing numerous canvases of landscapes and military scenes and demonstrating a great sensitivity in his depiction of light and shade (fig. 33). He executed the first modern mural in a public building in Iraq - at the entrance of Cinema Royal in Baghdad. He also offered painting lessons in his studio and urged young artists to continue their artistic training in Europe. Many artists who were later instrumental in the development of Iraqi modern art started their careers with al-Rassam. Later in life, he travelled in Italy, France, Germany,

[156]Ibid, pp.55-61.

and England as well as other Arab countries acquainting himself with European art movements and improving his own art education.[157]

Contemporaries of al-Rassam were Hajj Muhammad Salim, Muhammad Saleh Zaki (1888-1974) and Assim Abdul Hafid (1886-?). Salim and Abdul Hafid were in the Ottoman army and trained at Turkish military colleges, while Zaki studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul. Due to his training, Zaki's paintings had a freer and more naturalistic brush stroke than that of his peers. Abdul Hafid, on the other hand went to Paris on his own (1928-31) and continued his art training with Antoine Renault. He was later appointed an art teacher in government schools and wrote *Painting Lessons to Apply to Nature* (*durūs al-fann li'l-taṭbīq ʿala'l-ṭabiʿa*) which was the first art handbook to be published in Iraq. It was used for secondary school students and showed Abdul Hafid's interest in art education.[158]

This group of early artists was the first to introduce Western painting into Iraq through their own works, through private lessons and through teaching at secondary schools. However, they lived in a society where only a few of the educated upper class appreciated the visual arts. To a certain extent they managed to free their paintings of the rigid style followed by the Ottoman soldier-painters and encouraged their students to paint from nature instead of copying from photographs which was a common practice.

It is said that the first painting exhibition in Iraq was held in 1922, one year after the ascension of King Faisal I to the throne. Little information on this exhibition is available except in a reference concerning Gertrude Bell.[159] In the 1920s and 1930s, there was a small group of painters who considered

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[157]Ibid, pp.63-6 and N.Salim, L'art contemporain en Iraq, p.41.
[158]Al Said, Op.cit., p.72-6, Salim, Op.cit, p.41.
[159]Shaker Hassan Al Said has referred to the exhibition in his book though I could not find any mention of it in 'The Letters of Gertrude Bell'.

themselves art teachers rather than artists. Among them was Abdul Karim Mahmoud (1906-1986) who was influenced by his relative Hajj Muhammad Salim and by Abdul Qadir al-Rassam. Mahmoud taught Hafid Drubi, Jawad Salim, Issa Hannah and Zeid Saleh, all of whom became established artists. A third early artist was the painter and sculptor Muhammad Khidr, who taught Faiq Hassan and died at a young age in 1941. Unfortunately, none of Khidr's works has survived. Hajj Suad Salim (b.1918), the son of Hajj Muhammad Salim, was the first Iraqi cartoonist. He often published cartoons depicting social and political criticism in the daily papers. Other artists of the same period were Issa Hannah, ʿAta Sabri (b.1913) and Akram Shukri (b.1910). The latter was the first Iraqi to receive a government scholarship to study in England[160] while Sabri trained first at the Academia di Belle Arte in Rome (1937) and after World War II was sent to Goldsmith College in London, graduating in 1950.[161] In 1932, the second group exhibition was held as part of the Industrial and Agricultural Fair in Baghdad.[162]

During the 1930s, progress in the cultural field took off as the state encouraged art activities. In 1931, the government, at the instruction of King Faisal I, began allocating scholarships for art studies abroad; Akram Shukri was sent in the same year, followed by Faik Hassan in 1933.[163] In 1936, the Ministry of Education founded the Music Institute under the directorship of Sharif Muhyiddin Haidar who was an accomplished musician and composer. The success of the Music Institute prompted the government to open new

[160]Al Said, Op.cit., pp.81-8.
[161]Salim, Op.cit., p.52.
[162]Al Said, Op.cit., p.96.
[163]Interview with Jabra I. Jabra, Amman, 21/7/1992.

departments in drama, painting and sculpture. By 1940/41, The Institute of Music became the Institute of Fine Arts.[164]

The first group of fine arts students to graduate from the Institute totaled 12 and included Ismail Sheikhly, Khalid Jadir, Naziha Salim and Nizar Salim. Faik Hassan chaired the Department of Painting and Sculpture, which also employed Izra Hayya, who had previously taught at the Académie Julian in Paris. They were the only artists employed at the Institute, until Jawad Salim returned from Paris and took over the Department of Sculpture in 1941. Remarkably, no foreign or other Arab instructors taught at the Institute. The artists initially trained their pupils in drawing, painting, and sculpture according to their own acquired knowledge of Western rules of art and aesthetics. Even music classes adhered to the Western model at the outset. It was not until 1937 that the Institute began to teach Oriental music by offering ʿūd lessons. This preference for Western art derived from a strong desire among Iraqi intellectuals to become acquainted with all aspects of European thought and culture, a tendency which grew stronger when World War II broke out.[165] Iraqis opened up to new ideas because of the increasing contact with the West, especially England which had the largest presence in the country. These ideas appeared advanced and unusual in comparison to the Ottoman thought under which they were raised.

By the 1940s, fine art had already become part of intellectual life in Iraq and in 1941 the first art society was formed. The Society of the Friends of Art was founded by artists, architects and art-lovers among whose founding members were Abdul Qadir al-Rassam, Hajj Muhammad Salim, Akram Shukri, Faik Hassan, Jawad Salim, Hajj Suad Salim, ʿAta Sabri, Issa

[164]Al Said, Op.cit., p.111.
[165]Ibid, pp.111-4.

Hanna and Hafid Drubi. In 1941, the Society held its first group show for professional and amateur artists; it continued to mount regular exhibitions and hold other cultural activities (including lectures and painting lessons) for several years.[166]

During World War II, a group of Polish officers came to Baghdad with the Allied troops. Among them were several painters, two of whom had studied painting with Pierre Bonnard. The Polish painters got to know Iraqi artists and introduced them to the latest European artistic styles and the concept of painting from a personal point of view rather than copying nature in its sublime form. Faik Hassan admitted that only after meeting the Polish artists did he notice that light in Baghdad was not crystal-clear, as he used to think, but full of dust. Jawad Salim wrote in his diary that, after a discussion with the Poles, he came to realize the importance of colour and its application, and only then was he able to understand the works of Cézanne, Renoir and Goya.[167] Although Iraqi art historians such as Shaker Hassan Al Said dismiss the influence of the Polish artists on the modern art movement, they seem to have played a significant role in introducing Iraqi painters to modern concepts of art in the 1940s. Al Said himself admits that the Polish artists were responsible for breaking the links with the academic style and it was only at the 1943 annual show of the Society of the Friends of Art that current European styles became apparent in some of the works which were exhibited. Pointillism which was introduced by the Polish artists appeared in the works of Faik Hassan, Akram Shukri and Jawad Salim, three important pioneers in Iraqi modern art.[168] Thus the role of the Polish contribution is

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[166]M.Mudaffar, "Iraq", Contemporary Art from the Islamic World, p.159.
[167]Ibid, pp.159-160.
[168]Al Said, Op.cit., p.100.

hard to ignore. Furthermore the British presence in Iraq during World War II encouraged artistic development. For example, the 1943 exhibition of the Society of the Friends of Art was held at the British Council in Baghdad.[169]

The opening of the Institute of Fine Arts, providing art scholarships for study abroad, the involvement of the Polish artists with their local counterparts, and the activities of the Society of Friends of Art, all contributed to moving the Iraqi modern art movement from its limited boundaries into a broader international scale of reference.

Modern Pioneers.

The most important figure in Iraqi modern art was Jawad Salim (1919-1961), who guided the Iraqi artistic movement towards internationalism. He was the first artist to seek an equation between traditional heritage and modernism, by turning to the artistic legacy of ancient Mesopotamia and Islamic art and using both in terms of current international artistic styles. Salim got his training in Paris, Rome and London and was head of the Department of Sculpture at the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad where he instilled in his students the necessity of drawing on their cultural heritage to create a distinctive Iraqi artistic trend.[170]

Faik Hassan (1914-1992) was another important Iraqi pioneer. He received a government scholarship to train at the *École des Beaux Arts in Paris*, from which he graduated in 1938. Upon his return to Iraq, he put together an extensive exhibition in Baghdad where his cultivated skill in academic painting and his aptitude in the employment of colour were evident. After meeting the Polish artists, he freed his style of academic

[169]Ibid, pp.99-100.
[170]Jawad Salim is discussed in detail in chapter 15.

restrictions and took up Impressionism before moving to Cubism, Abstraction, and Expressionism, only later to return to Impressionism (fig. 34). For more than four decades, he taught at the Institute of Fine Arts, thus passing on his experience to generations of students, many of whom emerged as prominent artists.[171] Like his friend Jawad Salim, Hassan sought to develop an indigenous trend that could express local and international art concepts. Yet he believed that this trend could be achieved through the choice of subject matter rather than through a distinctive style. Throughout Hassan's artistic career, the subjects of his paintings continued to express the main feature of his identity. He painted simple city dwellers, peasants, Bedouins and horses, and portrayed the despair and superstitions of the poor on emotionally-charged canvases. Since the beginning of the 1980s Hassan has painted horses and genre scenes in a naturalistic figurative manner, but some of his works began to show signs of repetition and fatigue.

Hafid Drubi (1914-?) was a graduate of Goldsmiths College in London and was one of the founders of the Iraqi modern art movement as far back as the 1930s. In 1941/2, he opened the first independent studio in Iraq which he later relinquished to the Society of Friends of Art. He started his career under the influence of British Post-impressionism which he discovered during the period he had spent in London. He then moved on to Cubism, painting crowded city scapes of Baghdad and open country landscapes on large canvases (fig. 35). In 1951, Drubi was appointed supervisor of the joint atelier of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Baghdad University. He was faced with the challenge of encouraging students to take up art and discovering new talent. His success at the atelier inspired other colleges to

[171]Mudaffar, Op.cit., p.160, J.I. Jabra, Juthur al-fann al-'iraqi, pp.14-7.

open their own studios.[172] However, Drubi's chief significance lies in his teaching career, for as a pedagogue, he introduced his students to modern European art styles.

Art Groups.

As with Turkey and Egypt, art groups or societies were a major phenomenon in Iraq. It seems that in countries where early academies and a strong artistic movement flourished, art groups were the means by which different sets of artists united to become identified with a certain style or a set of ideas. Iraqi art groups started in the early 1950s with the formation of the *Société Primitive* by the French-educated Faik Hassan. The *Société Primitive* later changed its name to the Pioneers and continued its activities until the mid-1970s. Its members were a mixture of trained and self-taught artists, whose number grew with time. At its inception, the founding members were devoted to depicting scenes of nature as well as village and country life; therefore, they used to paint at the actual sites. They held their first exhibition in 1950 and continued to hold private exhibitions until 1962 when their shows moved to the National Museum of Modern Art.[173]

The second art group was formed by Jawad Salim in 1951 and named itself the Baghdad Group of Modern Art. They were the first to call for a local art style that drew on the country's cultural heritage while stressing the importance of developing a distinctive Iraqi trend which would also benefit from international artistic schools.[174]

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[172]Mudaffar, Op.cit., p.162, Al Said, Op.cit., p.95, Jabra, Op.cit., p.54.
[173]Mudaffar, Op.cit.,p.160.
[174]The Baghdad Group of Modern Art is further discussed in chapter 15.

In 1953, a third group of artists known as the Impressionists was formed by Hafid Drubi who had also been a founder of the Society of Friends of Art. At its inception, the group formed an Iraqi Impressionist school of painting that depicted local subjects. This group was instrumental in directing Iraqi art towards Western styles and away from academic figuration. Members of the Impressionists later experimented with various art trends which led some of them to paint in a cubist, surrealist or abstract manner.[175]

The 1950s were active years for Iraqi artists. Apart from the formation of the three mentioned art groups that defined the outline for the future development of Iraqi art, other crucial events took place. Most importantly, the Artists Society was created with King Faisal II as its honorary president. Its members were mainly established artists and architects who promoted the arts. The Society created the first exhibition hall[176] in which it held a sequence of exhibitions linking the artists to the public. Two other important art shows took place during the same period. The first was a comprehensive exhibition of Iraqi artists held by the Artists Society at al-Mansour Club in 1956. It included a massive number of works that demonstrated the different trends and styles current at the time. A jury was formed to select the work that was to be displayed. It refused many of the submitted pieces for being of unacceptable standard. Artists whose works were turned down held a separate exhibition which was named the *Rejected Exhibition*, along the same lines as the Paris *Salon des Refusés* of 1863. Both exhibitions revealed the standard that Iraqi artists had attained and the degree of self confidence they had reached in their effort to form a

[175]Mudaffar, Op.cit., p.162.
[176]Ibid, p.163.

distinctive artistic identity.[177] In the Society's 1957 exhibition, the public was surprised to see a portrait in oil painted by King Faisal II. The King, an accomplished artist in his own right, had trained with one of Iraq's pioneer artists, ʿAta Sabri.[178]

On June 14, 1958 a bloody revolution by a group of military officers ended Iraq's constitutional monarchy. King Faisal II was murdered along with his uncle the Crown Prince, his aunt, grandmother and many others, including Prime Minister Nūrī El-Said. Thus came to an end a period characterized by cultural growth where the visual arts, literature and music flourished alongside social, educational and economic development. Before the 1958 Revolution, artists in all fields were integrated into the mainstream of development, enjoying public as well as private patronage. The military revolution came as a jolt that shook the art movement in Iraq. Artists were torn between succumbing to the new dictatorship as propaganda tools in order to succeed, or safeguarding their freedom of expression which entailed obscurity and recrimination. A few of those who chose the latter course had to leave their country. The rest resigned themselves to the new regime in the hope that the political conditions would improve.[179]

The unsettled internal political situation in Iraq during the early 1960s, with its numerous coup-d'états, military dictatorships, state censorship, local uprisings and mass executions, created an unhealthy atmosphere that stunted art development. Appointments of deans and professors at Baghdad University and the Academy of Fine Arts were dictated by political

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[177]Ibid, p.163, Jabra, Op.cit., p.8
[178]Interview with May Mudaffar, Amman, 14/5/1992.
[179]Interview with Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, Amman, 21/7/1992.

affiliations rather than academic or artistic qualifications. Most of the artists employed by the government were communists. The untimely death of Jawad Salim in 1961 at the age of 41, and the withdrawal of Faik Hassan from the Pioneer Group in 1962, threw the art movement into further stagnation.

By the mid-1960s, young artists began to return to Iraq after completing their studies in Western Europe, the United States, the former Soviet Union, Poland and China. During the monarchy, art students who were given scholarships were sent to Western Europe and the United States, under the post revolution communist regime, all scholarships were for training in the former Soviet Union, the Eastern Block, and China. Some of these newcomers managed to inject the stagnating artistic movement with new blood. Jawad Salim's spirit and Faik Hassan's art classes had imbued Iraqi modern art with a continued sense of discipline and a longing to break through domestic boundaries into the Arab world and towards internationalism. The two pioneers had always advocated the necessity of artistic exchange. Modern communications simultaneously cut through local styles and paved the way towards more international artistic exchanges. However, artists of the 1960s generation remained faithful to their three pioneers: Jawad Salim, Faik Hassan and Hafid Drubi, each with his own method and group of disciples.

In 1962, the National Museum of Modern Art was inaugurated. It was a project that had started under the monarchy and was funded by the Gulbenkian Foundation and it housed a collection of contemporary Iraqi art. Many cultural schemes that were completed in the 1960s had already started under the monarchy although when they were inaugurated, the revolutionary

government took credit for them. One such example was the Sports Stadium designed by Le Corbusier.[180]

The Institute of Fine Arts became the Academy of Fine Arts in 1962, and at present is the College of Fine Arts. Most of the Academy's graduates became art teachers in government schools. A Polish couple, Roman and Sofia Artomosky, and a Yugoslav named Lazeski taught alongside Iraqi instructors. The three Eastern Europeans guided their students towards Abstraction and helped pave the way for a strong modernist element in Iraqi art.[181]

A number of artists from the 1960s generation began abiding by the teachings of Jawad Salim and including indigenous traits within the broader styles they followed. Mohammad Ghani Hikmat (b.1929) returned from Rome in 1961 with a diploma in sculpture from the Academia di Belle Arte and worked under Jawad Salim. Ghani's early work included figures of men and women from everyday life. By the end of the 1960s, his figures became abstract and he started incorporating Arabic calligraphy and ancient motifs in his engraved doors which are considered some of his best works. Ghani has recently executed a number of monumental public sculptures commissioned by the state. Their subjects were taken from folk tales, such as *Ali Baba* and the *Arabian Nights*.[182] Their overload of folk heritage and naturalistic figuration qualify them as purely decorative works with no artistic ingenuity.

Kadim Haidar (1932-1987) a highly educated artist, graduated from the Iraqi Institute of Fine Arts (1957) and was sent on scholarship to the Central College of Art in London (1957-1962). In 1965, he held an

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[180]Interview with May Mudaffar, Amman, 14/5/1992.
[181]Mudaffar, Op.cit., p.164.
[182]Ibid, p.164.

exhibition in Baghdad which became a milestone in the history of Iraqi modern art. It was the first one-theme exhibition ever held. On display were 40 paintings depicting the martyrdom epic of the Prophet's grandson Hussein, who was massacred with all his family by the Umayyad army at Karbala in Iraq in the 7th century AD (fig. 36). It was also the first time that an artist had used an historical theme with religious connotations to portray human tragedy in a symbolic and stylized manner. In this show, Haidar introduced a concept that was rebellious in both form and content. He included poetry and figuration in his works, intellectualizing art as well as presenting the public with a thematic exhibition.[183]

New Art Groups.

The formation of artistic groups continued through the 1960s. In 1965, the Innovationist Group was formed by a number of young artists and lasted for four years. Its members were mostly graduates of the Institute of Fine Arts. Innovation in the execution of art work was their major concern. In addition to canvas, oils and water-colours, they experimented with new media such as printer's ink, monotype, aluminium and collage. Their first exhibition was held at the National Museum of Modern Art.[184]

Al-Zawiyah was another artistic group. Headed by Faik Hassan, it included among its members Mohammad Ghani and artists from the 1950s generation. These artists advocated the implementation of art to serve national causes, a movement that developed after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

[183]Ibid. p.163, Salim, Op.cit., p.78.
[184]Mudaffar, Op.cit., p.164.

The group held only one exhibition which was the first to include works of political and nationalistic themes.[185]

The New Vision (al-Ru'ya al-Jadīda) was formed in 1969 by Dia Azzawi, Rafa al-Nasiri, Saleh al-Jumaie and other young artists. Their declaration called for freedom and revolution to uphold the future and proclaimed that "...revolution and art [were] linked to the development of humanity."[186] They opposed the revival of cultural heritage, stating that "...as long as we act freely towards it, our [artistic legacy] will not become a dictatorial force that imprisons us. We consider it our duty to use [our heritage] to conquer the world. We will speak a new language with symbols, that belongs to a new life and a new man".[187] The New Vision held several exhibitions under numerical titles signifying the number of participating artists.[188] The group's exaggerated, sweeping and emotional statements can be considered a reflection of the official climate in Iraq after the revolution. They introduced a new art trend that drew on mythology, calligraphy and religious iconography, in abstract and expressive canvases, and appeared to be an extension of the Baghdad Group of Modern Art.

The formation of artistic groups continued in the 1970s though most of them disintegrated after holding one or two exhibitions. The Triangle Group, the Shadow Group, the Academician Group, and the July-17 Group were among these short-lived associations. All the members of these groups were from the 1960s and 1970s generations of artists. A group which was to influence the modern Iraqi art movement, despite the fact it had held only one exhibition, was the One-dimension Group. Headed by Shaker Hassan Al

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[185]Ibid, p.164.
[186]Ibid, p.164.
[187]Ibid, p.165.
[188]Ibid, pp.164-5.

Said, the circle included Dia Azzawi, Rafa al-Nasiri, Mohammad Ghani, Abdul Rahman Kaylani, Jamil Hamoudi and others.[189] The importance of this group lies in its formal launching of the calligraphic school of art based on a theory conceived by Al Said.[190] I shall return to the consequences of this below.

Official Patronage.

The July Revolution of 1968 brought the Iraqi Socialist Baath Party to power. The new regime adopted an open-door policy vis-à-vis the arts although this policy was not entirely benevolent. Once more, the government exploited culture to serve its own purposes, using it as a propaganda tool. By patronizing art, the state managed to control intellectuals and deter them from opposing its authority. Hence, it succeeded in harnessing culture to serve the one-party system under the guise of official patronage. Since the 1958 revolution, cultural affairs had been part of the Ministry of National Guidance (in effect, the Ministry of Information) which allocated a considerable budget for the arts. From 1968, it began to acquire works of art from almost all practising Iraqi artists as long as the work was not objectionable to the party line. The Ministry also started holding international and local art exhibitions as well as literary festivals and seminars. *Al-Wasiṭī*, the first festival to be held, took place in 1972. It was a Pan-Arab exhibition of fine arts that was followed by the meetings of the First Congress of Arab Artists in 1973, which resulted in the formation of the Union of Arab Artists.[191] The Union started as an overblown and expensive

[189]Ibid, p.166.
[190]The One-dimension theory will be discussed in chapter 17.
[191]Mudaffar, Op.cit., p.166.

body of artists, torn by the different politics of its members and Arab governments. It has done nothing to serve Arab art thus far, and has held only two exhibitions, the first in Baghdad in 1974 and the second in Rabat in 1976.

The government's new open-door policy resulted in several exhibitions in other Arab cities including Cairo, Damascus, Rabat and Beirut which by then had become a venue for Iraqi artists. Official state patronage increased. Simultaneously, the National Museum of Modern Art multiplied its acquisitions of local art works and started participating in international biennales and exhibitions. Group exhibitions became more frequent, especially those held on national occasions and for important political events. One such example was an exhibition held after the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor by Israel in 1981.

The most important annual exhibition in the country commemorates the anniversary of the ruling Socialist Baath Party. The first such exhibition was held in 1969/70 and broadly reflected the scope of activities by Iraqi artists who were supporters of the current regime. It was open to all artists, regardless of their standards. Among artists who organized state exhibitions were Nizar Hindawi and Azzam Bazzaz while Suhail Hindawi, a young and talented sculptor, became famous through party exhibitions.[192] The majority of artists living in the country took advantage of their government's cultural policy and profited from the benefits offered to them.

In 1979, the Ministry of Information and Culture converted a traditional Baghdadi house into a Museum for Pioneer Artists. Paintings by Abdul Qadir al-Rassam were included in the collection.[193] In 1990, the

[192]Ibid, p.167.
[193]Ibid, p.167.

Museum was closed down and neglected thereafter. In 1986, the Saddam Centre for the Arts was inaugurated with an extravagant opening. On the occasion, the 1st Baghdad International Festival of Art took place, with the title *Art for Humanity.* It included works of artists from most parts of the world. The Centre is a gigantic edifice, originally conceived by the government as a supermarket. It replaced the Gulbenkian National Museum of Modern Art, whose permanent collection of Iraqi contemporary art was transferred to the new premises. The Museum has remained as a secondary exhibition hall. The collection of the Museum of Pioneer Artists was also moved to the Saddam Centre. An archive section was created to document the Iraqi plastic art movement,[194] though its activities thus far have been negligible.

During the 1980s, the government opened an Art College in the Muḥāfadāt Bābil as well as several art institutes in cities such as Basra in the south and Mūsil and Sulaymaniya in the north. Iraq's art community had previously been concentrated in Baghdad. This step relinquished the capital's monopoly on art and at the same time absorbed the increasing number of art teachers who were graduating from the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad and other art institutes. The employment of these artists provided a scope for their competence and an opportunity to develop local talent. Meanwhile, art lessons were included in the curriculum of the Ministry of Education's Institute of Applied Arts, and a five-year course in painting, ceramics and handicrafts was offered at the House of Heritage and Popular Arts (Dar al-turath wa'l-funun al-sh'abiya).[195]

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[194]Interview with Jabra I. Jabra, Amman, 21/7/1992.
[195]Mudaffar, Op.cit., p.167.

During the eight-year Iran-Iraq war, the authorities multiplied artistic activities to pretend that cultural progress was continuing in the country. These activities also served as a distraction from the war. The utilization of art to serve the state, which had already started with the 1958 Revolution and increased with the 1968 Baathist Revolution, reached new heights. Colossal portraits of President Saddam Hussain, sometimes covering entire buildings, appeared in Baghdad and all major cities. Monuments were erected in his name. One such example is the *Triumphal Arch* consisting of two arms with clasped hands, a cast of Saddam's own arms (fig. 37). Paintings and sculptures depicting the president in various situations, costumes (military, civilian, Arab dress, hunting gear, etc.) and among different groups of people (Bedouins, factory workers, Kurds, etc.) were made by well-known artists such as Mahoud Ahmad (fig. 38). Although the 1980s was a decade characterized by vigorous artistic activities, totalitarianism and the cult of Saddam cast a heavy shadow over it. Not all artists benefited from this kind of patronage. Those working with and for the Baath party were highly regarded and encouraged. Many artists had to go along with the regime despite their political inclinations, in order to benefit from the allowances given them in the name of art patronage. Some who conformed were even allowed to travel abroad to take part in exhibitions and seminars, despite an eight-year ban on travel that existed for the general population during the Iran-Iraq war. Only a few artists opted to leave the country rather than benefit under the current regime.

After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the ensuing Gulf war, the ban on travel was lifted by the government, and an influx of Iraqi artists came to Jordan in particular. They escaped from the censorship imposed by their government and the dire living conditions in the aftermath of the war and the

U.N. sanctions. Some artists had not left Iraq for more than a decade. Most of them brought their work to sell in Jordan; few found jobs and stayed on, and those who could obtain visas to countries in North Africa, the West, and the Far East, departed from the area.

Chapter 6.

Algeria.

In 1830, the French army conquered Algeria and made it a part of France rather than a colony or a mandate. As the mother country, France regarded its duty as one of civilizing the newly acquired territory and people. The official language of Algeria became French, education followed the same curricula as in France, and the teaching of Arabic was limited to religious schools where only the Qur'ān was taught. Students read French and European history instead of their own, and Algerians were actually considered French citizens subject to French law. The same situation prevailed in the cultural arena. There was a concentrated effort to civilize the natives of French-Algeria by force, so that they could ostensibly assert their French identity. Leading philosophers such as Augustin Berque cultivated their own views on the Arab-Berber mentality. Berque wrote: "...the Berber is not a dreamer. He has no lyrical imagination. His approach never extends beyond the cold contact with objects. The Berber artist is still an artisan."[196] A. Gayet, a specialist in Arab history wrote:"...He [the Arab] is indifferent to the shapes and colours that would provoke emotion from the rest of us...How is his perception so different from ours?...The Arab soul no longer belongs to our race..."[197] When the country gained its independence in 1962, the majority of Algerians were illiterate in Arabic as their mother tongue had become French after 159 years of colonization.

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[196]B. Mediene "Algeria", Contemporary Art From the Islamic World, p.16
[197]Ibid, p.16.

Orientalist Artists.

In 1832, Eugène Delacroix became the first French painter to visit the newly acquired territory of Algeria. A considerable number of French Orientalists followed in his footsteps thereafter. They discovered a new, exotic world which attracted them; some even resettled to live and work in the new province. A few of the Orientalists who visited the country were Gabriel-Alexandre Décamps, Charles-Émile Champmartin, Émile Vernet, Adrien Dauzats, Théodore Chasseriau, Eugène Fromentin and Edmé-Alexis-Alfred Dehodenq. They portrayed life in Algeria, its local customs and scenery in romantic genre scenes and through a descriptive, classical figuration. It was the Orientalists who introduced European easel painting into the country. In 1851, the Société des Beaux Arts of Algeria, whose membership was restricted to artists of French origin was founded. In 1900, the Musée d'Alger opened, to display the latest of their works.[198] Several French Impressionists visited Algeria including Monet who stayed there between 1860 and 1862 and Renoir who visited it in 1879.[199]

By 1894, the French Orientalist painters of Algeria were numerous enough to organize an annual salon in Paris where they displayed their work. In 1897, the Société des Peintres Algériens et Orientalistes was founded in Algiers.[200] There was even an École d'Alger in Orientalist painting which revolved around Algerian subjects depicted with compassion towards the natives. In 1907, the French Governor, M. Jonnart, founded the Villa Abd el-Tif (Maison des artistes) in Algiers, for French artists wishing to work in

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[198]Ibid, p.16.
[199]Sijelmassi, L'Art Contemporain au Maroc, p.17.
[200]Mediene, Op.cit., p.16.

North Africa in a free and unrestricted milieu and to enrich colonial life there. A Parisian jury selected the members and one-year scholarships were offered to two artists among them; in 1920, one of the scholarships was extended to two years. Similar ateliers were created in Constantine, Tlemcen, Ghardaïa, Touggourt and Fort-National. Throughout the years, 90 artists came to stay in the Villa to practice painting, sculpture and etching.[201] Algeria was the country most frequented by French painters who visited North Africa, however, their influence was far stronger on resident, non-Arab artists than on native Algerian painters.

The most important Orientalist artist to influence the beginning of Western art in Algeria was Alphonse-Étienne Dinet (1861-1929). A Parisian-born French painter, he studied art at the École des Beaux Arts and made several visits to the new province between 1884 and 1888. In 1887, he became so interested in North Africa that upon his return to Paris, he founded the Société des Peintres Orientalistes Français with Léonce Bénédite as its president. He then studied Arabic at the École des Langues Orientales. In 1889, he became more involved in the Orientalist movement which by then had gained public support. Dinet exhibited a painting that had an Algerian theme at the Salon, an incident which brought him a certain degree of fame. With the exception of a few portraits, his works only portrayed Algerian subjects. In 1904, he bought a house in Bou Saʿda and spent his time between Algeria and France. Dinet converted to Islam in 1913, changed his name to Nasr-Eddine, went on pilgrimage to Mecca, and alienated himself from his former Parisian milieu. When he died in Paris, his body was taken to Bou Sa'da for burial.[202]

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[201]S. Fazekas, La Villa Abd-el-Tif et ses Peintres, p.63.
[202]La Peinture Européenne en Tunisie sous le Protectorat, p.40.

The majority of Dinet's paintings comprised subjects from Islamic legends, Algerian deserts, animated everyday-life scenes, and love scenes against romantic backgrounds that included nubile nude women bathed in mauve shades. He nevertheless introduced Western academic teaching into Algeria (fig. 39).

Miniature Painting.

Algerian painting evolved under a double identity: an Islamic one based on miniature painting, classical calligraphy, and arabesque decoration, and a Western neo-classical style as implemented by the Orientalist painters.

At the turn of the 20th century, a trend appeared among the native Algerian artists who had held onto traditional Islamic art and rejected imported Western painting which was regarded as colonialist. Its initiator, Mohammed Racim (1896-1974), came from an artistic family. His father Ali was a traditional craftsman who became famous towards the end of the 19th century for his miniatures and illuminations on glass and beautiful wood carvings which decorated the interiors of many Algerian houses. His uncle Omar also worked in the family atelier where Racim got his initial apprenticeship showing a keen sense of design and colour. Racim enrolled in the Algerian École des Beaux Arts at an early age where he practiced Western three-dimensional painting. After graduation, he left for Paris and was employed in the Department of Manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale where he studied Islamic manuscripts. This was followed by a grant which allowed him to travel to Spain and study Islamic art in Cordoba and Granada. Subsequently, he went to London where the specialist on Iranian studies, Sir Denison Ross, helped him gain access to Islamic

collections in various museums.[203] By then, Racim had embarked on a quest to develop an authentic Algerian style that was related to his own heritage. Thus in 1914, he began the trend of Algerian miniature painting which differed from its classical precursor. In his miniatures, Racim respected the theory of the third-dimension and was able to develop a style that simultaneously combined Western and Islamic aesthetics (fig. 40). After receiving the Médailles des Orientalistes in 1924 and the Grand Prix Artistique d'Algérie in 1933, his fame was established. The same year, he became a teacher of miniature painting at the École des Beaux Arts in Algiers working with the specialist G. Marçais while assuming a missionary role in spreading this Islamic art form.[204] However, when this celebrated miniaturist and calligrapher participated in the 35th Salon des Artistes Algeriens (1935), his portrait of the head of the Académie d'Alger was given priority over his three-dimensional miniature paintings which interpreted daily Algerian scenes.[205]

Another early Algerian artist who practiced both miniature painting and Western figurative art was Mohamed Tammam (b.1915). Tammam started painting in 1932 and was a student of Racim who taught him painting and illumination. His skill in painting enabled him to participate in the Salons des Orientalistes d'Alger and the exhibitions of l'Union des Surindependants in Paris. At one point, he even worked as a designer at the porcelain factory of Sèvres in France. He took over teaching miniature painting after Racim left his post at the École des Beaux Arts in Algiers, and later became the Director of the Musée des Antiquités Classiques et

[203]Personal correspondence with the art teacher and painter, Aisha Haddad.
[204]A. Bahnassi,Ruwwād al-fann fi'l-bilād al-ʿarabīya, pp.207-9, I.Mardoukh, "Dirasa ʿan waqiʿal-fann al-tashkili al-jaza'irī", Al-tashkīl al-ʿarabī no.4, pp.64-5, Musées d'Algérie II, p.89.
[205]Mediene, Op.cit., p.16.

Musulmanes. Tammam's elaborate paintings compose a record of Maghribi culture.[206]

Mohamed Ranem (b.1925) is a miniaturist whose warm coloured paintings of local life-styles and historical events show more naturalistic traits than Racim and Tammam. Ranem became a professor of illumination at the École des Beaux Arts and has participated in numerous exhibitions held in his country, the Arab world and Europe.[207]

Calligraphy and the art of miniature painting were not just forms of decoration to these painters, but means of expressing their artistic and national identity. They spread these techniques among their pupils at the École des Beaux Arts, from which a number of miniature painters graduated, including Moustafa Jou῾t, Moustafa Bilkahla, Miqdani Bou ῾Oroor, and Bou Bakr Sahrawi who also visited Iran to improve his technique.[208]

Western Painting.

Western art in Algeria was most often practised by the descendants of French settlers whose works were regarded as superior to those of Algerian artists. In 1920, the French authorities established the École des Beaux Arts in Algiers and staffed it with French teachers who prepared the students to continue their studies at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris. Similar schools of fine arts were also opened in Oran and Constantine.[209]

Between 1914 and 1928, the first group of native Algerian painters came on the scene. These included Azouaou Mammeri (b.1886) who taught drawing in Fez and participated in several exhibitions in Morocco, France,

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[206]Musées d'Algerie, p.69.
[207]Ibid, p.89.
[208]Musées d'Algerie, p.69, Mardoukh, Op.cit., p.65.
[209]Bahnassi, Al-fann al-ḥadīth fi'l bilād al-῾arabīyah, p.131.

Spain and Algeria (fig. 41), and Abdelhalim Hemche (b.1906), a graduate of the École des Beaux Arts in Algiers and Paris where he also taught drawing and practiced both miniature and Western painting.[210] They were followed by Binsliman, Farrah, and Boukarsh.[211] All these artists were known for their neo-classical style, Algerian landscapes, and genre scenes following in the footsteps of Orientalist artists.

By the end of the 1930s, Orientalist and Neo-classical themes were exhausted and had deteriorated into debilitated forms of folklore and sycophantic representations. The works of the all-French members of the Villa Abd el-Tif (including Cuavy, Basoulès, Antoni, Berasconi, Assus, Galliero and de Maisonseul), revolved around Algerian folk culture and Impressionism. They rejected more recent trends in art as being too modern. Algerian painting had reached a standstill after consistently ignoring or repudiating the modern movements in Europe led by Picasso, Braque, Matisse, Klee and others. Only two artists, Sauveur Galliero and Jean de Maisonseul, broke away from the Villa Abd el-Tif group in the early 1940s and pursued a dual quest for verity and universality. It was a domain above national and individual problems and superseded outward reality: to those two painters, art could only be abstract.[212]

Unlike the other Arab countries, Western art in Algeria was imposed rather than introduced by the French. Moreover, it also tended to become the monopoly of French settlers until the 1950s. Because of the reactionary and conservative attitude of the established artists and the art schools in the country, the introduction of modern Post-impressionist styles only penetrated

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[210]Musées d'Algérie, p.90.
[211]Bahnassi, Al-fann al-ḥadīth, p. 58 and Mardoukh, Op.cit., p.65.
[212]Mediene, Op.cit., p.16-7.

Algeria in the 1950s. In the interim, early Algerian artists reverted to classical Islamic miniature painting and calligraphy as a counter movement to the widespread Orientalism in French-Algerian painting. Most trained artists who evolved in the 1930s and 1940s either followed in the footsteps of artists of French origin and their Orientalist and Neo-classical styles, or developed a naïve style as did their self-taught counterparts.

A few native Algerian painters did begin to shift from the Neo-classical style towards modernism. Ali Khodja (b.1923) began his artistic career as a miniaturist depicting traditional Algerian interiors. He later took up easel painting, however, and experimented with the distribution of coloured masses throughout the composition, in a style that wavered between Fauvism and Abstraction (fig. 42). Bachir Yelles (b.1921) and Mohamed Bouzid (b.1929) explored Cubism, Fauvism and Expressionism while maintaining local themes.[213]

Naïve Painting.

In 1947, a thirteen-year old illiterate orphan named Baya (b.1931) was lauded by the French critic André Breton as a child prodigy.[214] A self-taught artist, she began painting and working with clay in 1943. Baya's style was based on infantile dreams and imagination expressed in naïve-surrealistic forms. Although she constantly used the same figures, she was unable to explain her works rationally. Orphaned at the age of five from a poor family, Baya directed her grief towards a world of birds and animals and through her sincerity, captured the attention of France's established artists. When she had an exhibition at Gallerie Maeght in Paris, Picasso took her to his country

[213]Musées d'Algerie, pp.70-9.
[214]Ibid, p.91.

home in Vallauris and observed her while she kneaded clay into animal forms. She stopped working between 1952 and 1967 when she was busy bearing children and raising a family. At the age of 66, she resumed painting in water-colour in her same dreamlike fashion (fig. 43).[215] Despite her fame in France, she continued to follow her initial surrealistic, naïve style. Two other naïve artists, of earlier generations - Hacène Benaboura (1898-1960) and Mohamed Zmirli (b.1909) - came on the art scene at the same time as Baya. In 1946, Benaboura took part in his first group exhibition in Algiers, which was followed by other solo and group shows. He won the second Grand Prix Artistique de l'Algérie in 1954 and was named a laureate painter in 1957.[216] Both Benaboura and Zmirli were known for their naïve style through which they depicted urban scenes and landscapes of different parts of Algiers (fig. 44). Like Baya, they exhibited their work locally and internationally.

Algerian Artists in Paris.

A number of Algerian artists went to Paris in the 1950s. Their theoretical and practical knowledge of art had been severely retarded by their limited education under the colonial French administration. The most prominent among this group was Mohamed Issiakhem. When he went to Paris in 1953, he met with other Algerian and North African painters including Abdelkader Guermaz (b.1919), Mohamed Khadda (b.1930), Choukri Mahmoud Mesli (b.1931), Bachir Yellès (b.1921), Abdallah Benanteur (b.1931) and Ali Khodja (b.1923), as well as the Moroccans Ahmad Cherkaoui, Jilali Gharbaoui and the Tunisian Hédi Turki, all of

[215]Mediene, Op.cit., pp.18-9.
[216]Musées d'Algérie II, p.91.

whom suffered from gaps in their art education. These Algerians faced an overwhelming cultural onslaught on their artistic identity. On the one hand, their social base had been shattered by colonialism, and on the other hand, their knowledge of their own history and culture was incomplete.[217]

Mohammed Issiakhem (1928-1986) faced tragedy at an early age. While working on a home-made bomb in 1943, to throw into the American military camp, the bomb exploded and killed two of his sisters and a nephew. Subsequently, Issiakhem fell into a coma, staying in hospital for two years and emerging with his left arm amputated. Between 1947 and 1951, he enrolled first in Algiers' Société de Beaux Arts and then in the École des Beaux Arts, while simultaneously training in miniature painting with Omar Racim. In 1953, he continued his studies at the École Nationale Suprérieur des Beaux Arts in Paris working in Legueult's painting and Georg's printing ateliers, and graduating in 1958. Issiakhem was one of the founders of the National Union of Plastic Arts after independence, and held a number of exhibitions in Algeria and abroad. He was attracted by left wing sentiments and travelled to Vietnam (1972) and Moscow (1978/79).[218] While in Paris, Issiakhem witnessed the formation of Abstract-expressionism and other styles of modern art which he quickly adopted. In his thickly-layered, symbolic compositions, man is always the central figure, ambiguously crowded with a jigsaw of forms, signs and blotches in neutral, sombre colours. In his highly expressionistic works, woman becomes the ultimate symbol of drama and silent suffering (fig. 45).

Like most Algerian artists who appeared in the 1950s and 1960s, Mohamed Khadda (1930-1991) was a self-taught painter. He used Arabic

[217]Mediene, Op.cit., p.17-8.
[218]Personal correspondence with Aisha Haddad.

characters and signs taken from Berber tattoos in his abstract compositions which display a sophisticated study of colour. Khadda's artistic language was based on his 'free alphabet' which is a sum of unpredictable movements in the composition reminiscent of primordial writings (fig. 46). With them, he executed studies of olive trees and Algerian landscapes, always defining his theme through colour. Khadda held several exhibitions in France and one of his works is at the Musée d'Arts Modernes in Paris.[219]

Issiakhem, Khadda, along with Geurmaz, Zerarti, and Benanteur, are considered to be the pioneers of Algerian modern art. The majority of these Algerian artists who matured in the 1950s and 1960s were self-taught. They made a complete break from the old traditions in painting and started a modern art movement in the country. Through their travels in France, they came into contact with the latest trends in Western art. Their work, however, differed distinctly from that of French artists. Having had no formal training in art and having suffered deculturalization through colonialism, they wanted their work to portray a national trait by using local signs and motifs in abstract formations.

Artists of the Revolution.

During the years of resistance against the French, a number of artists fought with the National Liberation Army. Fares Boukhatim, who was well known as the artist of the revolution, began painting when he was in the army. He depicted the horrors of the war of independence in scenes with soldiers in trenches as well as the life of refugees on the border. He became extremely popular in Algeria and his works which were full of nationalist

[219]Contemporary Arab Artists, catalogue of exhibition at the Iraqi Cultural Centre, London, 8 Nov.-7 Dec., 1978, (unpaginated) p.18 from title page.

sentiments were shown in Tunis, Hanoi, Prague, Shanghai, Warsaw, Peking, Havana and Madrid. A second artist who also worked for the Algerian Revolution and paid tribute to it in his paintings was Abd Msbahi. Even after independence, artists such as Mardoukh continued depicting nationalistic subjects and glorified the so called 'three revolutions': cultural, industrial and agricultural, as well as the Palestinian and the Vietnamese uprisings.[220]

After Independence, most Algerian artists living abroad returned to their country to contribute to the development of the modern art movement in Algeria. A number of talented students enrolled at the art academies of the Arab world and Europe, while others studied at the Algerian École des Beaux Arts. The styles and trends they took up varied between figuration and abstraction.[221]

Musée National des Beaux Arts.

The French authorities began the project for the Musée d'Alger in 1900 mainly to exhibit the works of Orientalist artists. In 1930 the Musée Nationale des Beaux Arts was inaugurated in a new building to commemorate the centennial of French rule in Algeria. It holds a collection that shows the evolution of French sculpture from Roman times until the present and a section devoted to North African subjects in French painting by Delacroix, Chasseriau, Fromentin, Dehodencq, Guillaumet and Lebourg as well as works by minor painters of the same school.[222] The collection also includes few works from the German, Spanish, Dutch, Flemish, French and Italian schools of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries as well as a 19th-century

[220]Mardoukh, Op.cit., p.66.
[221]Ibid, p.66.
[222]La Villa Abd-el-Tif et ses Peintures, pp.59-60.

Impressionist collection and paintings by the artists of Villa Abd el-Tif. After independence, the works of contemporary Arab-Algerian artists have been added to the Musée's previous collections.[223]

Artistic Societies.

The National Union of Plastic Arts, founded in 1964, is the only body to which most plastic artists in Algeria belong. It functions under the umbrella of the Ministry of Culture and Information and the Algerian National Liberation Front. The two official bodies materially and morally assist the Union which has chapters in Constantine and Oran (Wahran). It has opened an exhibition hall in Algiers where it holds shows on national occasions as well as exhibitions by visiting artists. Member-artists have formed several artistic groups within their Union, such as the Tattoo Group which draws on folk art, the First Group, the 54-Group, and the Young Painting Group.[224]

The generation of artists that appeared after Independence was usually trained at art schools in Algeria, while fewer were trained abroad. Unlike their predecessors, they were able to acquire a formal art education. Thus, their ties with their culture were more established as their Arab-Islamic cultural identity was reinstated. In general, the works of post-independence artists of the 1970s and 1980s are mostly abstract and abstract-expressionist in style. They either feature an attempt to depict local subject matter through the manipulation of Arab and Berber signs, or simply ignore them and hold onto the concepts of international art.

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[223]Guide du Musée National des Beaux Arts d'Alger, pp.5-9.
[224]Mardoukh, Op.cit., p.66.

Of all the Arab countries, Algeria was the only one to pursue a dual track in its modern art movement, which included a traditional art form. Islamic miniature painting and the European Orientalist school constitute the basis of contemporary Algerian art. This dichotomy has persisted until the present so that modern art in Algeria continues to revert either to native heritage or to turn to internationalism.

Chapter 7.

Tunisia.

Early European Influence.

In 1881, Tunisia ceased to be part of the Ottoman Empire and became a French Protectorate until its independence in 1955. Foreign artists had visited Tunisia before it came under French rule. The early Orientalists often chose historical events pertaining to North Africa's Roman period as the predominant subjects of their paintings. Stereotypical Orientalist themes including picturesque landscapes, exotic natives, Bedouins, blind men and women, slaves, execution, and bath scenes developed much later, around the turn of the century, by a generation of colonial artists. They displayed their works of Tunisia in the Parisian salons and impressed the public and critics with their exotic subjects.[225]

After their occupation of Tunisia, the French authorities founded the Institut de Carthage in 1894, which became the most important scientific and cultural institution in the colony. Its function was to assert the cultural and educational legitimacy of the colonial power so as to complement its political and economic activities. In the same year, the Institut de Carthage organized the first Salon Tunisien in Tunis, marking the formal introduction of Western art into the country. The main participant was a young French painter named Jean Chalon. He had only been in Tunis for a few months when he was invited to participate in this exhibition in order to entice other artists to join in. His style bespoke of the neo-classical and romantic school and depicted

[225]N. Ben Romdhane, "Art et artistes coloniaux", La Peinture Européenne en Tunisie sous le Protectorat, p.21-23.

narrative genre scenes. However, with the appearance of Impressionism in the 1870s, this style had already started to wane in Europe. Other colonial artists who took part in the first salon were P. Bridet, Paul Proust, Mme Viola, Truelle, Mlle Geneviève Grégoire and the sculptor Théodore Rivière. Works were also borrowed from private collectors in the French community to fill the exhibition hall. Four annual salons were held following this exhibition. However, between 1899 and 1900, financial difficulties disrupted the schedule. In 1901, the salons were recommenced and continued until 1907. Other individual and collective exhibitions for local colonial artists took place simultaneously. These fell into two groups: the Société des Amis de l'Art and the Société des Amis des Beaux Arts, with each group organizing its own salon. On the other hand, the Institut de Carthage sponsored other art events including exhibitions by Émile Pinchart (1905), Alexis de Broca (1906) and Georges Charpentier (1907).[226]

Due to the efforts of Élie Blondel, an official responsible for the artistic section of the Institut, the Salon Tunisien was resumed in 1907 and continued until 1914, when it was forced to halt its activities at the outbreak of World War I. It reopened once again in 1920. The first twenty years of the Salon (1894-1914) revealed a slow evolution of artistic activities due to a shortage of money and the difficulty in penetrating colonial social life. When the salons were launched, the taste at the time was conservative and opposed the new trends that were current in Europe. Instead, the Salon in Tunis preferred Orientalism, with all its romanticism and imaginative depiction of the East.[227] Throughout the first two decades, the Salon

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[226]A. Louati, "La vie artistique à Tunis avant l'independance", la Peinture Européenne En Tunisie Sous le Protectorat, pp.9-13.
[227]Ibid, p.13.

Tunisien embraced the Orientalist school of art. The general trend was one of narrow and provincial academic traditions, borne of the conservative French colonial mentality that ran against modern trends current in Paris. In 1913, just before the war broke out, the works of three members of the Salon des Artistes Français - Albert Gleizes, Marie Laurencin, and Buissière - were exhibited. They brought with them the first fruits of the new European artistic trends. In 1922, Van Dongen displayed his works, and in 1924, Albert Marquet, Maurice Denis and others also exhibited. However, these modern masters did not leave a great impact on local artists.[228]

The Centre d'Art was the first art school to open in Tunisia in 1923. Its director, M. Boyer, was assisted by Armand Vergeaud. In 1930, the Centre d'Art became the École des Beaux Arts and came under the direction of Vergeaud until he died in 1949. Organized much like similar French institutions, the curriculum of the Centre d'Art consisted of applied courses in drawing, painting, sculpture, decoration, etching etc., as well as academic courses in perspective and the history of art. The teaching environment was strictly conservative and followed traditional academic methods. Although it was open to all nationalities, the Centre d'Art students, whose ages ranged between 16-30, were almost exclusively European. Until independence in 1955, the number of Tunisian pupils was negligible in comparison to foreign students.[229] However, the institution became instrumental in training several generations of artists.

At the time, numerous foreign colonial artists lived in Tunisia. In addition to the Salon Tunisien, they held many exhibitions: the Salon des

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[228]A. Louati, "Tunisia" , Contemporary Art from the Islamic World, pp.261-62, Ben Romdhane, Op.cit., p.23.
[229]Louati, "La vie artistique à Tunis", Op.cit., p.16.

Artistes Tunisiens which took place annually between 1924 and 1934; the Expositions de l'Afrique Française which alternated yearly between Tunis, Casablanca and Algiers; annual exhibitions by the students and friends of the École des Beaux Arts; and an exhibition of painters working with the railway system. All these artists formed a mosaic of different styles, trends and experiments, though none attempted to look deeply into or draw upon the country's cultural heritage. Most of the artistic groups were started by foreign resident artists and dissolved quickly. Examples include the Salon des Artistes Tunisiens, headed by André Delacroix (1924-1932), the Syndicate of Professional Artists which was founded after the World War II by a decorator working at the Municipality Theatre, G.L. Lemonnier, and the Group of Four. Sooner or later, all foreign artists resumed displaying their work at the Salon Tunisien.[230]

The foreign artists who settled in Tunisia collectively influenced the development of local artists by introducing Western art into the country. Among the French artists who interacted with their indigenous counterparts was Alexandre Fichet (1881-1968). Fichet moved to Tunis in 1902 and became President of the Salon Tunisien from 1913 until his death in 1966. During his tenure, he opened its doors to young artists such as Laurencin and others who brought new ideas and fashions. Fichet was a Socialist and the editor of the newspaper, *Tunis Socialiste,* which opposed colonial policy. He exhibited regularly at the Salons in Tunis and Paris and gave drawing lessons at the École des Beaux Arts and several other schools.[231]

After moving to Tunis in 1910, Armand Vergeaud (1867-1949) has been associated with the teaching of art in Tunisia since. Between 1923 and

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[230]Ibid, pp.15-20.

[231]La Peinture Européenne en Tunisie sous le Protectorat, p.44.

1949, he taught at the Centre d'Art and then became its director. Vergeaud was well known for his portraits (fig. 47), including that of the Bey Ahmed Pasha which hung in the Throne Hall at the palace in Tunis.[232]

Henri Gustave Jossot (1866-1951) was a painter, illustrator, writer, and poster designer (fig. 48). In France, he was known as a cartoonist for the larger newspapers at the end of the turn of the century. Though he had often visited Tunisia since 1896, he only settled there in 1912 in order to escape from Europe. He converted to Islam soon thereafter and became a member of the Salon Tunisien from 1912 onwards. In 1924, he joined the Salon des Artistes Tunisiens as a participant and member of the jury.[233]

The Russian Alexandre Roubtzoff (1884-1949) was a graduate of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts in Saint Petersburg. In 1912, he won a prize at the Academy which enabled him to travel for four years to countries of his choice. After a stay in Spain, he reached Tunisia when World War I broke out, which was followed by the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. He became a naturalized French citizen and integrated into colonial society, taking part in its artistic life and building a reputation for himself as a portrait painter. Between 1920 and 1950, Roubtzoff exhibited regularly at the Salon Tunisien and other salons in Paris.[234] Most of these resident artists established their own ateliers where they offered lessons to other artists among the European settlers as well as a few local amateurs.

Pierre Boucherle (1895-1988) was one of the first foreign artists who was born in Tunisia. He displayed his work regularly at the Salon Tunisien and elsewhere. In 1936, he formed the Group of Four with Antonio Corpora,

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[232]Ibid, p.74.
[233]Ibid, p.49.
[234]Ibid, p.69.

Jules Lellouche and Moses Levy. He represented his adopted country at several exhibitions in Paris and London and was one of the founders of the Tunis School in the late 1940s.[235] Moses Levy (1885-1968) spent his life between Tunisia, Italy and France, and was known for his landscapes and traditional Tunisian themes. During one of his stays in Paris, he met Van Dongen and Dufy to whom he paid homage in one of his works.[236] Antonio Corpora (b.1909) graduated from the École des Beaux Arts in Tunis and worked in the Atelier Armand Vergeaud. He participated in the Salon Tunisien for the first time in 1929. Apart from the Group of Four, he established a neo-cubist group and made contacts with the artistic trends current in Europe.[237] Jules Lellouche (1903-1963) was also a graduate of the École des Beaux Arts in Tunis. He participated in the Salon Tunisien and other exhibitions such as the Éxposition de l'Afrique Française from 1921 onwards, until he moved to Paris in the 1960s.[238]

Most of this group of Tunisian-born, French artists trained at the École des Beaux Arts and the ateliers organized by the older generation. They took part in the Salon Tunisien, taught at the École, but moved to Europe after independence, having in the meantime introduced new artistic trends such as Impressionism and Cubism into Tunisian art. Other European artists who lived in the country were Edmond Küss, Léo Nardus, a painter and art patron, Maurice Picard, Jeannine Varesme, Henri Saada who taught at the École des Beaux Arts, Frida Uzan, Jacques Arnaud, Edgar Naccache, Pierre Demoutier and Fernande David. They all displayed their work

[235]Ibid, p.31.
[236]Ibid, p.54.
[237]Ibid, p.33.
[238]Ibid, p.51.

collectively in Europe and North Africa, mainly at the Éxposition de l'Afrique Française.[239]

Early Indigenous Tunisian Artists.

Modern Tunisian art developed either on the periphery or within the framework of the annual exhibitions organized by the French. Ahmed ben Osman was the first local artist to adopt Western painting styles, while Hédi Khayachi (1882-1948) was the first professional artist in the modern sense of the term. Khayachi used to visit Pinchart's studio before he went to train in Italy. Although he never had a solo exhibition, Khayachi still managed to make a living from his art by painting portraits of the Beys of Tunis and genre scenes of traditional life according to the Orientalist principles (fig. 49). Abdulwahab Jilani (1890-1961) also had his initial training at Pinchart's studio. He became the first Tunisian Muslim to exhibit at the Salon Tunisien in 1912. In 1921, he left for Paris and joined the Académie Julian and the free ateliers of Montparnasse. He participated in the activities of the Paris School and worked with Modigliani, Picasso, Soutine, Chagall, Zatkin and others. Because he spent most of his life in Paris, his artistic vision developed outside his native environment, thus severing all ties with his original culture and he became more of a European than an Arab artist (fig. 50).[240]

The second quarter of the 20th century was a period of national struggle for independence in Tunisia. Many of the resident European artists died, placing the burden of responsibility for developing the modern art movement squarely on Tunisians artists. The most important pioneer to

[239]Ben Romdhane, Op.cit., pp.23-4.
[240]Louati, "Tunisia", Op.cit., p.262.

influence the formation of modern art in Tunisia was Yahia Turki (1901-1968). He was a self-taught painter who entered the civil service at a young age. He participated in the Salon d'Automne of 1922. In 1923, Pinchart offered him a scholarship at the École des Beaux Arts in Tunis after seeing his work at the Salon Tunisien, whereupon Turki resigned his civil service position to study art. He attended art classes for a few months only, however, preferring the freedom of spontaneously treating subjects taken from his environment to the restrictions of academic training (fig. 51). His choice was a difficult one to pursue because Tunisian artists were not treated with the same respect accorded to foreign artists. Turki nevertheless persevered and created a framework for the artist to operate in the Tunisian environment, which led to a deeper correlation between his works and the Tunisian way of life. With direct, cheerful colours and minimum detail, he portrayed the old city of Tunis and its inhabitants going about their every day life. Turki broke away from the Orientalist stereotypes and expressed, in a free and sometimes abrupt manner, the emotions of simple people. His style exposed a new dimension for native artists and added an indigenous quality to local painting. Turki is considered the father of Tunisian painting and his disciples became the vanguard which formed Tunisia's modern art movement. His students included Abdelaziz ben Rais, Ali ben Salem, Hatem el-Mekki, Amara Debbech and Ammar Farhat.

Abdelaziz ben Raïs (1903-1962) trained at the Centre d'Art and was known for his peaceful landscapes and an economy in the use of colour which did not detract from the overall richness of his work (fig. 52). Ali ben Salem composed his works with elements of traditional folk culture in a style inspired by painting on glass and miniatures; he held several exhibitions in France and Sweden. Hatem el-Mekki (b.1918) exhibited at the 1934 Salon

Tunisien, and was known for his mercurial personality and his varied styles, media and techniques, including light watercolours, oils, graphics, and prints. He tried his hand at realistic, expressionistic, and naïve styles, and designed posters, currency, and postage stamps.[241]

Ammar Farhat (b.1911) was to become one of the most important figures in the history of Tunisian modern art. A self-taught artist from a humble background, he earned a living as a manual labourer. In spite of his early hardships, Farhat never compromised his high aesthetic values. His realistic works depicted his urban surroundings and his relationship with people from different social classes, such as labourers, small shop-keepers and street musicians (fig. 53). Farhat's experience of growing up in an impoverished milieu to become one of the great artists in the country never made him lose touch with reality.[242]

The mature and free drawings of Amara Debbech (b.1918) placed him in a special position in the history of modern Tunisian art. He started exhibiting at the Salon Tunisien in 1937 and continued until World War II when he emigrated to France where he lived until the early 1960s. His works included theatre designs for several plays. In 1967, he held a comprehensive exhibition of more than two hundred drawings and paintings at the Municipality Hall of Arts in Tunis, which covered more than a quarter of a century of his artistic career. At the end of the 1960s, however, Debbech returned to France a hopeless and disturbed man, and put an end to his life.[243]

The early native Tunisian artists were conscious of the rift that separated them from their foreign peers living in the country. They felt that

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[241]Ibid, p.263, La Peinture en Tunisie des Origines a nos Jours, pp.55-6.
[242]Louati, "Tunisia", Op.cit., p. 263, La Peinture en Tunisie, p.57.
[243]Louati, "Tunisia", Op.cit., p. 263, La Peinture en Tunisie, p.59.

personal genre painting which depicted domes, popular quarters, and cold stereotypes in the suq was insufficient either to portray or represent their nation and people. They believed in a more humanistic approach towards their country and attempted to portray a sympathetic and realistic view of North Africa, without the traditional clichés. They thus broke away from the trends of the École des Beaux Arts and tried to implant a deeper meaning into their work. This new direction was initiated by Yahia Turki and continued under Ammar Farhat, whose paintings showed the world of the poor and the deprived, tinged with a certain cynicism.

Tunis School.

The earliest artistic group in Tunisia to include Arab Tunisian artists, was the Tunis School which was founded by Pierre Boucherles at the end of the 1940s. Although this group had neither a manifesto nor a unity of well-defined and common aims, they were able to present their own interpretation of the country through their works. This interpretation was best translated by their adherence to certain aesthetic and sentimental values that were bound to a traditional way of life, folk culture, and the validity of their artistic heritage. It was evident in the works of Yahia Turki, Ammar Farhat, Zoubeir Turki, Abdelaziz Gorgi (fig. 54), Ali Bellagha and Safia Farhat. They diverged from contemporary European styles and tried to revive the two-dimensional forms of Islamic miniatures, the popular tradition of painting on glass, Arabic calligraphy, and the different techniques of local handicrafts. They mainly borrowed various elements from their traditional and architectural environment. Members of the Tunis School included pioneers like Yahia Turki and Ammar Farhat, while others came from the second generation of artists like Jellal ben Abdallah (b.1921), Abdelaziz Gorgi

(b.1928), Ali Bellagha (b. 1925), Safia Farhat (b. 1924), Zoubeir Turki (b.1924) and Hédi Turki (b.1922). Artists of the third post-independence generation, among whom were Hassan Soufi (b.1937) and Abdelkadir Gorgi (b. 1949), were also involved.[244] Though they all agreed on a number of aesthetic values and viewpoints and pursued a certain discipline, each one developed his or her personal style independently.

The Tunis School played an important role in introducing and developing Tunisian modern art. Immediately after independence and until the early 1960s, its beliefs and values became synonymous with what art should express in terms of national, spiritual and material values.[245] In spite of their quest to find a distinctive artistic style, however, members of the Tunis School reverted to folk iconography to assert their national artistic identity. They depicted local subjects and scenes from their milieu with more compassion than the Orientalists. In terms of style, each member of the group cultivated a different manner of representation. They never produced one unique mode of expression. The only common denominator among them was the choice of subject matter that drew on their national heritage.

The first two to break away from the Tunis School were Hatem el-Mekki and Hédi Turki. They chose to diverge from their peers' belief in transforming folk values into a symbolic or a thematic painting. This rupture indicated the emergence of new trends among the 1960s generation. They believed that affirming their national and cultural identity meant breaking free of the harmonious ambience of their local environment, cutting loose from their regional constraints and the thematic content of daily life, and benefitting from the experiments of international art. Thus, many artists

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[244]Louati "Tunisia", Op.cit., p.263.
[245]Ibid, pp.263-4.

adopted Abstraction, Expressionism, Surrealism and other contemporary styles in vogue internationally. Those who opted for symbols searched through their cultural heritage, and tried to include them within a more general and contemporaneous framework. This desire for change and delving into new experiments overpowered the earlier feelings of limiting the themes and techniques of art to local issues and developments. The confrontation between the younger and older generations led to the popularity of abstract painting.[246]

The introduction of abstract art into Tunisia raised new questions concerning the aims and means of visual art and mobilized the entire artistic community. Its direct influence on figurative painters forced them to pay closer attention to problems of a purely visual nature, such as the compositional value of a painting through space and colour distribution. It also pushed many Tunisian artists into the international arena. Hédi Turki (b. 1922) was influenced by Jackson Pollock's expressive abstraction and Mark Rothko's fields of colour after a visit to America.[247] Most abstract artists trained in Tunis at the École des Beaux Arts, while a few enrolled at the Technological Institute of Art and Architecture. Seldom did they travel to Paris or Rome to pursue their studies. From this local basis of exposure, many Tunisian artists practised some form of abstraction at some point during their artistic careers, without being exclusively concerned with abstract art. By the end of the 1970s, however, the tide of abstraction began to ebb under the influence of a new figurative interest which emerged through different kinds of Expressionism, Neo-realism and Primitive art. By the early 1980s, a number of abstract artists were propelled towards Pop Art

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[246]Ibid, p.264.

[247]A. Louati, L'Abstraction dans la Peinture Tunisienne, (unpaginated) p.5 from title page.

and depicted mundane daily scenes, making use of photography.[248] Thus, the new art trends that had started in the United States in the 1960s began to pervade Tunisian modern art within a decade or so.

The Search for a Tunisian Art Style.

Since the beginning of the Tunisian modern art movement, local artists have been obsessed with a desire to develop a local art style or what they called an 'authentic' style. This desire could be a reaction to the superficiality of the Orientalist school and academic rigidity as propagated by the early European painters of Tunisia. Yet in a sense, even the Orientalist artists were driven by a desire to situate their work and relate it to the country's culture and people, through their choice of subject matter. They were followed by a generation of Tunisian pioneer artists who broke away from inflexible academic rules in search of an original approach to art. The Tunis School called for realistic representation. With special consideration to the country's cultural heritage, they hoped to offer a sympathetic insight into its customs and values without exaggerating, and over-dramatizing its poverty, backwardness and folklore. This quest to ground Tunisian art in a local environment continued with the rise of abstraction, and, as in other parts of the Arab and Islamic world, was a stage that followed independence from foreign rule. The aim was to discover an indigenous artistic identity in order to assert the artist's individuality. In the early 1960s, a movement began which attempted to lend local character to abstraction by identifying it with traditional culture. Adherents of this trend drew on Arabic calligraphy, elements of arabesque decoration and architectural forms. They recalled the analogy between two-dimensional space in Islamic art and modern European

[248]Louati, "Tunisia", Op.cit., pp.264-5.

Expressionism and Abstraction. This movement divided artists into two groups: one, led by Najib Belkhodja, was based on constructivism of forms; and the other, led by Nja Mahdaoui, utilized calligraphic shapes as the basis of the composition.

Najib Belkhodja (b.1933) is a self-trained artist who believes in the necessity of linking up with international artistic experiences through a critical attitude towards abstraction rather than a complete and blind imitation of the Western model. Because he believes that the latter has taken place in Tunisia, he has reverted to using calligraphic shapes and elements of Islamic architecture such as domes, arches and geometric forms within a two-dimensional perspective. Belkhodja's paintings are built up on the architectural construction of a city, bound together by cursive and angular shapes that recall the rhythm of Kufic script (fig. 55).

Nja Mahdaoui (b.1933) was first trained at the Atelier Libre in Carthage before going to the Academia Santa Andréa in Rome to specialize in graphic art. He first started creating abstract work through relief paintings. In the early 1970s, he began working on his calligraphic compositions under the influence of the Iranian painter Hosseyn Zenderoudi.[249] The main element in these compositions is the Arabic letter which he uses within illegible, abstract, visual arrangements, in two-dimension formations.[250] Mohamed Sammoud (b.1942) and Mohamed Zwawi (b.?) are adherents of the calligraphic group while Ali Bellagha, Hédi Labban and others have only dabbled in it.[251] Another trend attempting to link Tunisian modern art to the

[249]Ibid, p.265.
[250]Nja Mahdauoi is discussed in chapter 17.
[251]Louati, "Tunisia", Op.cit., pp.265-6.

local environment, is based on the inclusion of folk signs and symbols such as Fatima's hand and the evil eye within an expressive composition.

The abstractionists were not the only artists to defy realism. Although abstraction was a major movement to oppose the Tunis School, other artists appeared who also refuted the School's doctrines. They were the neo-figurative painters who rejected both the abstractionists' disregard for realism and the superficial classical figuration. Through Expressionism, Surrealism, Neo-realism, and Primitive painting, they tore reality apart and reconstructed it according to their personal vision.

Although the repetition of different forms of traditional Islamic crafts continued side-by-side with contemporary Western art trends, this duality fostered the desire of Tunisian artists to inject Western artistic styles with local features. However, in spite of all the efforts that brought about daring experimentations, no distinctive style has set Tunisian contemporary art apart. The most common means by which artists have thus far situated their work in a Tunisian milieu, was by their choice of a subject matter that dealt with traditional forms and signs. The only original artistic interpretations have been undertaken by Najib Belkhoja and Nja Mahdaoui in their use of calligraphic forms within their abstract works.

Chapter 8.

Morocco.

Morocco was the only Arab province that was neither conquered nor governed by the Ottomans. Therefore, no Turkish influences are found in Moroccan culture and art. Morocco preserved its own art and architectural styles, descendents of a long unbroken tradition that goes back to Islamic Spain. It did not receive the uniform Turkish overlay from the 16th century onwards, retaining an intact Berber art in the countryside as well as the high style of building in the towns.

The main sources of modern art in Morocco have come through Islamic art, the European Orientalist school of painting (introduced after 1912), and Berber handicrafts. The latter displays a tendency towards stylized vegetal and animal forms, geometric designs, and signs composed of straight lines and zigzags. All these decorative elements are imbued with mysterious constructions derived from the Berber script, tifinagh, which is used in ornamentation and for body tattooing.[252]

Introduction of Western Art.

As we have seen, European expansion in the 19th century instigated a growing interest in North African culture. Numerous Orientalist painters came to Morocco, and Delacroix's visit in 1832 was a milestone in his own artistic career.[253] For most Western artists, Morocco signified Tangier, a partly Jewish city that had once been under Portuguese rule and English

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[252]M. Sijelmassi, "L'Art Contemporain au Maroc", pp.14-6.
[253]Ibid, p.17.

influence (due to its proximity to Gibraltar). The rest of the country was inaccessible to foreigners because of the dangers of tribal warfare and the fact that Christians were unwelcome unless they were accompanied by an ambassador, in the manner of Delacroix. The fact that Morocco was never under Turkish rule accounted for its individual character and grandiose architecture which never failed to impress foreign travellers. Besides Delacroix, the most famous of the Orientalists to visit Morocco, several artists - Alfred Dehodencq, Henri Regnault and Émile-Aubert Lessore - came to paint in Morocco. Other artists who visited the country included the Italians Stafano Ussi and Cesare Biseo, the Englishman Hercule Barbazon Barbazon, the American Louis Comfort Tiffany, the Belgian H.J.E. Evenepoel, and the Swiss Frank Buchser.[254]

The introduction of easel painting into Morocco is associated with the period when it became a French Protectorate in 1912 and when a Spanish zone was established on its north Mediterranean coast. The administration of Tangier and the surrounding country had 'special characteristics' which meant it was under multi-national control, including France and Spain.[255] After 1912, several European painters came to live in Morocco and formed the 'colonial school'. Some were officials in the civil service while others were professionals such as doctors and lawyers whose hobby was painting. They became the élite of the European colony, launching exhibitions and salons and founding artistic societies. In about 1918, the Colonial Administration transformed historical monuments into ethnographic museums which

[254]P. Jullian, The Orientalists, pp.117-22.
[255]N. Barbour, Morocco, p.152-3.

included ateliers and exhibition halls. Subsequently, artistic associations such as La Kasbah in Rabat (1924) began to appear.[256]

An example of this first generation of Moroccan painters was Mohamed ben Ali Rbatie (1861-1939). He worked for the English painter John Lafort who taught him to paint. Rbatie moved between various jobs and places: he was a labourer at the firm of Saint-Louis in Marseille (1918), a soldier in the Tabors Espagnols regiment (1925), and an employee at the Bank of Bilbao in Tangier (1929). After opening and managing an art gallery for two years in Tangier (1933), he first became an art restorer and then a baker (1937). Throughout his various jobs, he never stopped painting. He exhibited his works in London (1916), in Marseille (1919), and in Rabat (1922) when he was patronized by P. Ricard, Director-General of Fine Arts in Morocco. He also held several exhibitions in Tangier. Rbatie was a prolific, self-taught artist who worked with gouache, and executed many paintings that recorded Moroccan ethnological scenes with a native's sympathetic perspective. He painted marriage, circumcision, and wedding celebrations, Royal Palace ceremonies, feasts, and public places, etc. (fig. 56).[257] Rbatie was one of a group of self-taught artists who made the transition to Western easel-painting through his naïve works.

Others artists managed this process by transforming miniatures and illuminations into free-standing canvases. One such artist was Abdelkrim Ouazzani (b. 1912). He had trained at the ateliers of master artisans, and in 1931, worked at the Musée Universitaire in Meknes where he specialized in miniature painting and illumination under the supervision of the French teachers Ricard, Baldoui and Vicair. In 1937, he received a diploma as a

[256]Sijelmassi, Op.cit., p.19.
[257]Ibid, p.19.

miniaturist and illuminator at the Exposition Internationale de Paris, after which he dedicated himself to the arts of the book, decorative arabesques and calligraphy.[258] His works are in various Moroccan royal palaces, the King Fahad Mosque in Riyadh and the Mohamed V Mausoleum in Rabat. Ouazzani painted themes drawn from the Arabian Nights (fig. 57) as well as scenes of daily life and executed several manuscripts as well as a Qur'an, reviving a classical form of traditional Moroccan art that was on the decline and injecting it with new vitality.[259]

Naïve Painting.

During the 1940s, local self-taught artists came in direct contact with resident colonial painters and started imitating their Orientalist style, however, in an untrained primitive manner. Tayeb Lahlou (1919-1972) was directly influenced by Majorelle. Others followed a naïve style full of fantasy. A representative of this second trend was Moulay Ahmed Drissi (1923-1973) who said: "What good is it to paint what everybody can see? I want to paint what I alone can see, to share it with others."[260] He transformed the oral folk literature of stories and legends into imagery (fig. 58). In 1945, a Swiss couple the Fuex family, both of whom were painters, admired his work and took some to sell in Lausanne, sending him back painting materials. This encouraged Drissi to take up art as a career. Once again he caught the attention of another foreign artist, a Swede, who invited him to Sweden. From 1948 onwards, he made several trips across Europe, visiting museums and ateliers.[261]

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[258]Ibid, p.19.
[259]Ibid, p.235.
[260]Ibid, p.19.
[261]Ibid, p.19-20.

Ben Allal (b.1924), known as the poet-painter of Marakkesh, was another self-taught artist who worked in the same naïve, narrative style as Drissi. He was discovered by his employer, the painter Azéma, through whose encouragement Ben Allal was able to hold his first exhibition in his native town of Marrakesh, in 1948.[262] Ahmed Yacoubi (1932-1987) was discovered in Fez at the age of 16 by Paul Bowles, an American writer living in Tangier from before World War II. Yacoubi moved to Tangier where he entered the cosmopolitan artistic milieu of Francis Bacon, William Burroughs and Brion Gysen. In 1952, he exhibited his paintings in New York. Similarly, Mohamed Hamri (b. 1932) was an illiterate, naive painter who was discovered by the American artist Brion Gysen in the 1950s. Other professional artists eventually embraced the so-called naïve folk style (among them was the painter Chaïbia).[263]

Western Trends and Early Artists.

While the northern region of Morocco was under Spanish rule, several artists adopted the academic and Post-impressionist styles. However, they were hardly recognized because the Spanish colonial authorities only encouraged Orientalist and naïve painting. Only few names are found in archives: el-Menebhi, an aristocrat from Tangier; Abdesselam al-Fassi Ben Larbi from Fez; and Jilali Ben Chelan, from Rabat. All their paintings could be classified as neo-impressionist in contrast to their contemporaries, the miniaturists and the naïve painters. However, none of their works have been found.[264] After World War II, an academic trend developed when the

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[262]Ibid, p.20.
[263]Ibid, pp.20-1.
[264]T. Maraini, "Morocco", Contemporary Art from the Islamic World, p.213.

Escuela de Bellas Artes was established in 1945 in Tetouan, a part of the Spanish Protectorate. The school was administered by the Spanish painter Don Mario Bertuchi who, since 1930, had been the director of the École des Arts et Métiers, an institution dedicated to the revival of traditional Moroccan arts. Mohamed Sarghini (b.1923) was the first Moroccan to join the Tetouan school. He later continued his art training at the Academia San Fernando de Bellas Artes in Madrid. One of the very early pioneers of modern art in Morocco, Sarghini exhibited his works for the first time in 1941. He painted in a figurative style influenced by the 'Spanish School' of contemporary Spanish artists like Tapies. He later became the Director of Escuela de Bellas Artes in Tetouan. In 1950, the French established a second art school, the École des Beaux Arts in Casablanca.[265]

Hassan El Glaoui (b.1924) was another early Moroccan artist although he appeared late on the art scene. He painted in secret during his childhood, as his father had prepared him for a more serious career. One day, General Goodyear, the founder of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and a friend of El Glaoui's father, saw his work and encouraged him to continue. He held his first show in 1952 at Gallerie Weill in Paris, after which he enrolled at the École Nationale des Beaux Arts and spent fifteen years in the French capital working with Émilie Charmy. In 1965, he returned to Morocco and has since concentrated on painting horses, which are his passion.[266] El Glaoui not only established himself as an artist, but became a personal friend and bridge partner of King Hassan II.

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[265]Sijelmassi, Op.cit.,p.21 & 262.
[266]Ibid, p.138.

Louis Hubert Gonsalve Lyautey, who was the first French Resident-General in Morocco (1912-1916 and 1917-1926) revealed a particular appreciation for traditional Moroccan culture. He preserved many Islamic monuments and built new administrative buildings and cities (Casablanca) that were in harmony with the existing lay-out and landscape around them.[267] His policy of sustaining indigenous crafts was contrary to the systematic destruction of traditional culture that took place in Algeria. P. Ricard, Director-General of Fine Arts, organized and directed the crafts and continued Lyautey's old policy. He also played an active role in safeguarding the visual heritage of Morocco through the creation of an archive on popular artistic traditions.[268] Despite the fact that Moroccan cultural heritage was unappreciated at the time, it later became a source of inspiration which manifested itself in the paintings and sculptures of modern Moroccan artists.

Early Modern Art.

Immediately prior to Independence in 1956, contemporary styles of art current in the West began to appear in Morocco. They were propagated by the schools of fine art which facilitated in making Moroccan modern art a profession.

With the opening of the Escuela de Bellas Artes in Tetouan and the École des Beaux Arts in Casablanca, the Orientalist school and naïve painting began to lose their former popularity. Furthermore, in the 1950s, a few isolated painters such as Aherdane, Meziane, Milloud, Cherkaoui and Belkahia worked separately to create a broad-based foundation for the emergence of a modern Moroccan art movement.

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[267]Micropaedia VI, Encyclopaedia Britannica, p.409.
[268]Sijelmassi, Op.cit., p.22.

Mahjoubi Aherdane (b.1924) was an officer active in the resistance movement against France. After independence, he occupied several ministerial posts and was elected a deputy to the National Assembly. Aherdane was introduced to painting by an artist friend during a stay in Nice in 1947. He was a self-taught painter who started his art career illustrating the poetry he wrote until he eventually took up oil painting to depict imaginary themes in a surrealistic manner (fig. 59).[269]

Meriem Meziane (b.1930) also started as a self-taught artist. Her father was the first officer to become a general in the Moroccan army after independence. Meziane held her first exhibition in Malaga, Spain in 1953, which was followed by several others throughout Morocco. In 1959, she graduated from the Academia San Fernando de Bellas Artes in Madrid where she later settled with her family.[270] Meziane is a figurative painter who depicts local architecture, nostalgic landscapes, and scenes of festivities and personages from southern Morocco. She pays special attention to the details of costumes and jewelry while recording native popular traditions (fig. 60).

The first *avant garde* artist of the modern period in Morocco was Ahmed Cherkaoui (1934-1967). Cherkaoui first went to Paris to train at the École des Métiers d'Art. He then enrolled in the École Nationale des Beaux Arts, and finally studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. Upon his return from Poland, he was sent to Paris on a Unesco scholarship to research Arabic calligraphy, and signs in Berber art. In the 1960s, Cherkaoui became the first Moroccan artist to seriously study the significance of signs and motifs found in tattoos, pottery, jewelry, rugs and leatherwork, across the Atlas mountains and other parts of the country. When he included them in

[269]Ibid, pp.42-44.
[270]Ibid, p.217.

his plastic works, he did not copy them but graphically explored their shapes to give a new mystic dimension to the composition (fig. 61). For Cherkaoui, colour was as important as his signs.[271] He was the first Moroccan artist to develop his own abstract style, simultaneously Western and indigenous. Cherkauoi and his contemporaries of the 1950s generation established the framework in which Moroccan modern art would flourish.

In the 1960s, art gained a degree of professionalism due to the increase in the number of students returning from scholarships abroad and cultural exchanges between Morocco and Europe. Both of these developments influenced the formation of contemporary Moroccan art. New painters became preoccupied with the issue of a modern art that would foster an independent national identity to interact with the Arab world, in particular, and the Third World in general.

Mekki Meghara (b.1932) graduated from Tetouan's Escuela de Bellas Artes before continuing his studies, first at the Escuela de Bellas Artes de Santa Isabella de Hungria in Seville and then at the Academia San Fernando de Bellas Artes in Madrid. He has taught at the Escuela in his native Tetouan from 1961.[272] After a short period of naturalistic painting, he adopted Expressionism and used a mixture of sand and glue with his oils on burlap, creating paintings in relief. Meghara has recently started to include figures in his expressionistic and quasi-surrealistic compositions.

Jilali Gharbaoui (1930-1971) sold newspapers during the day in order to attend evening painting lessons. His efforts paid off when, in 1952, he was granted a scholarship to the École des Beaux Arts in Paris and then to the Académie Julian. In 1958, he spent time in Rome on a scholarship from

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[271] Ibid, p.116.
[272] Ibid, pp.201.

the Italian government, only to return and settle in Rabat in 1960. He passed through several stages including French Impressionism and German Expressionism before reaching a lyrical abstraction which he introduced into Morocco (fig. 62).[273]

Farid Belkahia (b.1934) started painting at the age of 15. When he was 20 years old he went to the École des Beaux Arts in Paris (1954-59) and then received a scholarship to study theatrical design in Czechoslovakia. Upon his return to Morocco in 1962, he was appointed Director of the École des Beaux Arts in Casablanca (1962-1974). While in Paris, Belkahia was influenced by the works of George Rouault and Paul Klee. In Morocco, he became preoccupied with popular signs and motifs, numbers, Arabic calligraphy, and characters taken from the Berber script, tifinagh.[274] Belkahia paints on hand-stretched leather, using henna and other natural colours (sumāq and saffron for example) as his pigmentation, much like traditional craftsmen working in leather and rugs (fig. 63).

Mohamed Melehi (b.1936) graduated from Tetouan's Escuela de Bellas Artes in 1955. He then embarked on a series of trips to Europe and the United States, studying art and doing research. Upon his return to Morocco, he became a teacher at Casablanca's École des Beaux Arts (1964-69). In the form of the sea wave, Melehi discovered a synthesis between traditional art related to the visual world and contemporary expression.[275] His variations of the wave, which he borrowed from popular crafts, became his central theme in creating modernistic abstract renditions that sometimes included geometric forms and illegible Arabic calligraphy (fig. 64).

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[273]Ibid, p.156.
[274]Ibid, p.67-8.
[275]Ibid, pp.206-7.

Mohamed Chebaa (b.1935) and Saad Cheffaj (1939) are two other Moroccan artists of the same generation who delved into the artistic language of signs. Like their peers, they both studied abroad. Chebaa first went to Tetouan's Escuela de Bellas Artes and then to the Academia di Belle Arte in Rome (1962-64). In 1964, he became a professor at the École des Beaux Arts in Casablanca and was instrumental in reorganizing the school.[276] He decoded the signs of his artistic heritage and re-introduced them within a modern abstract language while safeguarding their original two-dimensional aesthetics (fig. 65). Cheffaj also began his training at Tetouan's Escuela de Bellas Artes, and then continued at the Escuela de Bellas Artes de Santa Isabela de Hungria in Seville and the École du Louvre in Paris, where he studied philosophy and archaeology. Upon his return, he taught at the Escuela de Bellas Artes in Tetouan. From his earliest initiation, Cheffaj had been a non-figurative painter who worked on burlap glued to wooden planks. He did not hesitate to hammer big nails in his work or to affix other materials such as cloth, wood, or the head and limbs of a plastic doll, in a symbolic context, against a background of geometric signs, circles and crosses. Cheffaj has recently abandoned his geometric abstractions altogether and taken up figurative painting which has made a come back among artists from the Tetouan region.[277]

All of the above-mentioned artists emerged after independence and received either all or part of their training in the West. They were pre-occupied with the search for a national artistic identity that would simultaneously take advantage of their Moroccan heritage and Western art techniques. They were instrumental in accelerating the emergence of a

[276]Ibid, p.109.
[277]Ibid, p.113.

modern Moroccan art from the 1960s onwards. Their work was also contemporaneous with the literary movement that reflected the same search for an authentic Moroccan identity.

In December, 1963, and January, 1964, the International Meeting of Artists (Rencontre internationale des artistes) took place in Rabat. It succeeded in bringing together famous artists such as Picasso, Matisse, Miró, Fontana, Hartung and Sougaï, along with a number of internationally-unrecognized Moroccan artists. The meeting was organized by a friend of Cherkaoui, El Fethemy, who had been the Cultural Counsellor at the Moroccan Embassy in Paris. This gathering became a stepping stone for Moroccan artists into the international art arena.[278] It not only established first-hand contact between local and internationally-renowned artists, but also, for the first time, created an opportunity for dialogue between Arab and Western painters. After the Rencontre, Moroccan artists were convinced that to be contemporary one did not have to abandon one's own heritage. On the contrary, they came to realize that modernism in art could well coincide with Islamic aesthetics.

In 1964, Farid Belkahia, the Director of the École des Beaux Arts in Casablanca, with Mohamed Melihi and Mohamed Chebaa, began replacing the old models of Greek statues and still life paintings which the students had to emulate, with reproductions of Moroccan handicrafts. In addition, they included lessons in Arabic calligraphy in the school's curriculum. They became known as the Casablanca Group. They took their art out to the public with whom they wanted to interact and began displaying their works in the squares of Marrakesh instead of galleries.[279] They also protested

[278]Ibid, p.23.
[279]Ibid, p.24.

against the artistic programme carried out by foreign bodies such as the Club Méditerranée.[280] The Casablanca School understood that since the colonial period, a struggle between two images had taken place: one was a confused identity represented by pure folklore, while the other was an autonomous artistic experience. This polemic also dominated the field of culture with its post-colonial infrastructure. Members of the Association of Moroccan Writers, students, professors and journalists pursued the same debate as to what was truly national and what merely appeared national.[281]

During the 1970s, a number of ateliers and commercial galleries were launched. The art movement thus gained a more professional character.[282] However, in spite of the establishment of a national artistic entity which was both varied and promising, artists lacked any proper organization. Subsequently, the Association of Moroccan Artists was founded in 1972, after the creation of the Baghdad-based Union of Arab Artists in the same year. The Association included 40 members, and made contact with artists in the Middle East, and attended inter-Arab meetings in Algiers (1974), Tunis (1975), Baghdad (1972 and 1974) and other Arab capitals. During those meetings, Moroccan artists discovered similarities between their movements and others, such as the Casablanca Group and the One-dimension Group in Iraq. They also discovered that contemporary Arab art followed a dual track that drew on Arab heritage while abiding by Western trends.[283] Through their experimentation with calligraphy and the numerous Berber characters

[280]The Club Méditerranée is a French company that owns touristic villages all over the world where it organizes cultural events to entertain their customers.
[281]Sijelmassi, Op.cit., p.24.
[282]Ibid, p.23.
[283]Ibid, p.25.

and folk motifs, Moroccan artists succeeded in establishing a unique modern artistic language that was unrestricted by academic teachings.

Chapter 9.

Iran.

The decline of Persian art which set in during the 18th century, paralleled the political degeneration of the country. Similar conditions to those in Turkey also appeared in Qajar Iran. Corrupt and weak rulers, government incapacity, an Afghan invasion, wasteful imperialistic enterprises of the Afsharid Nadir Shah, a succession of civil wars, and loss of foreign markets all led to widespread poverty, despondency and confusion, a climate hardly conducive to the development of the arts. No worthwhile monuments were built in this later period, while old ones became dilapidated through neglect while in the minor arts standards declined. Artists managed to maintain their old standards in just two domains, calligraphy and carpet weaving.[284]

Clumsy and ungainly architecture, garish decoration and cumbersome furniture flooded Iran, particularly from Russia and increased contact with Russia and Western Europe began to influence Iranian art. To make matters worse, this type of art caught the fancy of the nobility and deprived the few remaining genuine Islamic artists of valuable patronage.[285] Certain innovations began to appear in Qajar painting during the late 18th century, both in media and application as artists started using oil paints and gradation in colour was introduced while portraits, in particular, became popular (fig. 66). However, artists continued to make manuscript drawing and lacquer painting.[286]

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[284]A.U. Pope and P. Ackerman, A Survey of Persian Art Vol. XVI, pp.245-9.
[285]Ibid, p.245.
[286]K.Diba, "Iran", Contemporary Art from the Islamic World, p.150.

Introduction of Western Art.

Despite the evident Western influences which began to appear in 18th-century Iran, only at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries did Iranians (including students) start travelling to Europe. One of the first artists to do so was Mohammad Ghaffārī, known as Kamāl-al-Mulk (1852-1940). He first studied painting at Tehran's newly created polytechnic, Dar al-Funun, and in 1902, went on to study at academies in France and Italy, including the École du Louvre.[287] He introduced academic realism into Iran at a time when his countrymen were being exposed to Western technology and photography. He broke with the current formal stereotypes and adopted a naturalistic style that competed with the camera in its depiction of fine detail. Kamal-al-Mulk looked at nature objectively so that his mastery of draughtsmanship allowed him to record his subject matter down to the minutest detail. When he founded the School of Fine Arts in Tehran (Madrasa-ye Ṣanāyeʿ-e Mustaẓrafa), in 1911, Kamāl-al-Mulk transmitted his newly acquired Western academic style to his students.[288] He introduced and promoted it among the public, despite the fact that it was already dying in Europe. Kamāl-al-Mulk consequently became the painter-laureate of the last Qajar shah.

Another prominent Qajar painter was Abul-Ḥasan Khān Ghaffārī, who had visited Italy in the mid-19th century where he studied painting techniques in the museums of Rome and Florence. Upon his return to Iran, Ghaffari did not teach art and the influence of his European training was confined to his own work. Kamāl-al-Mulk, on the other hand, was

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[287]K. Emami, "Post Qajar - Painting", Encyclopaedia Iranica vol. II, p.641.
[288]Diba, "Iran", Op.cit., p.150.

instrumental in introducing easel painting into Iran and fostering basic changes in Iranian painting and art appreciation. Meanwhile, traditional miniature painting in manuscript illustrations and lacquer work were reduced to curios and in time, gave way to academic easel painting.

Folk Art.

Even though the traditional arts declined, popular art continued to be produced. The poorer classes remained attached to pictorial folk traditions which were manifested in qahwa-khāneh[289] murals and oil paintings that were put up to decorate local coffee-houses. Their themes were taken from stories of the Shāhnāma and the accounts of the sufferings of Shi'ite martyrs. Votive folk art in shrines and saqqah-khāneh[290] banners, standards and symbols of martyrdom expressed in Shi'ite passion plays provided another level of artistic expression for folk artists and would prove to be a rich source of iconography for later modern Iranian artists.[291]

Pioneer Artists.

The main source of inspiration for most Iranian pioneer artists was nature, in particular their country's varied landscape. Although any artistic links with Iran's cultural past were almost indiscernible at first. Only during the mid-1950s did artists begin to search into their heritage and create works the public could identify with.

Sohrab Sepehri (1928-1980) was a leading poet and modern painter. He graduated from the School of Fine Arts at Tehran University before

[289]Qahwa-khāneh is a coffee-house.
[290]Saqqah-khāneh is a public water fountain like the sabīl.
[291]Emami, Op.cit., p.641.

specializing in lithography at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris (1957) and in woodcut techniques in Tokyo (1960). Sepehri was adept in graphics and painting, both of which showed the influence of Japanese design. He participated in the Venice Biennale of 1950 and the Sao Paolo Biennale of 1963; he also held one-person exhibitions in New York and Paris. In his semi-abstract, simple style with watercolour effects, Sepehri painted landscapes of the countryside around his native Kashan, trying to assert an Iranian element in his art (fig. 67). In his later period, Sepehri made a series depicting tree trunks and included his poetry within the composition.[292]

Abul Qasim Sa'idi (b.1926) is an artist of Sepehri's generation who studied at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris. He creates colourful renditions of trees in blossom with a strong calligraphic character in his lines. Naser Assar (b.1928), a Paris-based artist, and Manushehir Yakta'i (b.1922) who paints still-lifes and portraits in an abstract-expressionist manner, are also contemporaries of Sepehri.[293]

Introduction of Modern European Trends.

The Allied Forces occupied Iran during World War II and contact with the West increased as did exposure to Western culture. After the war, a number of Iranians including students, travelled abroad to pursue their education. Many studied art in Europe and the United States. Several exhibitions showing works of the Kamāl-al-Mulk school simultaneously took place in Tehran. The most important of these were held at the Iran-Soviet Cultural Society (VOKS) in 1946, and the series of exhibitions held at the

[292]Ibid, p.645.
[293]Ibid, p.645.

Mehregan Club (headquarters of the National Teachers Association) in the early 1950s.[294]

Modern Western trends in art were properly introduced into the Iranian modern art movement by artists who had completed their studies in Italy and France. Meanwhile, modernization in the form of a social, political, and cultural onslaught was rapidly overtaking Iranian culture, including art and literature. The most prominent among the new modernists was Jalil Zia'pur (b.1928). After graduating from the School of Fine Arts at Tehran University, Zia'pur went to France and trained under the Cubist André Lhôte. He started an art club and a monthly publication called *Khorūs-e-Jangī* (the Fighting Cock) with a group of friends in 1949. *Khorūs-e-Jangī* championed the cause of modernism and became a rallying point for avant-garde painters, poets and dramatists. The appearance of quasi-cubist, expressionist and even abstract canvases at Tehran's first exhibitions, triggered a public debate on the merits of modern art. The debate lasted nearly three decades and polarized artists and critics alongside the 'new versus classical poetry' controversy.[295]

The 1940s brought about mainly derivative works dependent upon European models. They ranged from Impressionism to Cubism and Surrealism, and, to a lesser degree, Abstraction, but in their effort to master new techniques and assimilate new trends, Iranian artists overlooked originality. In the exhibitions of the 1940s, post-Impressionist masters were the main source of inspiration and figurative painting was dominant. On the

[294]Ibid, p.641.
[295]Ibid, p.641.

other hand, Russian and German artists were less studied and abstraction claimed only a minimal following.[296]

Art Patronage.

By the mid-1950s the government had become aware of the importance of patronage for contemporary artists. The Department of Fine Arts (later to become the Ministry of Arts and Culture) recognized the significance of regularly-organized major art exhibitions in order to support the modern art movement in Iran while paving the way for the participation of Iranian artists in international events such as the Venice Biennale. In 1954, Marcos Gregorian (b.1925) returned to Iran after completing his art training in Italy. He opened the first art gallery in Tehran, the *Gallerie Esthétique* (1954-59). In 1958, Gregorian organized the first of the five Tehran Biennales undertaken by the Department of Fine Arts. The first four were held at the Abyaz Palace in the Golestan Palace compound and they only accepted local artists. The last Tehran Biennale took place in 1966 at the Ethnographic Museum with the participation of artists from Turkey and Pakistan. In the first Biennale, all the major Western styles of art were represented. With every following exhibition, abstract works increased in number along with some explicitly Iranian subjects. By the third Biennale, the styles and techniques of paintings were no longer uniform. It was here that the first national trend in painting emerged in the works of Hosseyn Zenderoudi, the initiator of the Saqqa-khana School. When the last Biennale was held in 1966, the organizers were hoping to transform it into an Asian exhibition, hence the inclusion of 37 Pakistani and Turkish artists. Iranian participation was cut from 113 to 38 in order to create an equilibrium

[296]Yarshater, "Contemporary Persian Painting", Highlights of Persian Art, II, p.363.

between visiting and national artists. It was never repeated after 1966, however, the reason for terminating this important artistic event was never made public.[297]

The state began to play an effective role in the development of contemporary Iranian art in the 1970s. The Ministry of Culture opened two exhibition halls, Oftab and Mehrshah, and subsidized other privately-owned galleries. Artists were sent abroad to participate in international exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale and the Salon d'Automne in Paris. Various government ministries began commissioning artists to execute works for public buildings. A number of modern art museums were also established. Private collections of modern art were started by Ebrahim Golestan and Kamran Diba, and eventually the Lajevardi family also began a formidable collection of contemporary Iranian art. Large corporations also started their own collections, following the example of the Behshahr Group which accumulated around 400 contemporary Iranian paintings. Heading the list of private collectors was the Empress Farah who had already built a comprehensive collection of modern Iranian art which she later donated to various museums in the country. The late Prime Minister Abbas Hoveyda also built up a collection for the Prime Minister's Office.[298]

In 1977, the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (Mūza-ye honārha-ye mʿases) was established under the auspices of the Farah Pahlavi Foundation which was already responsible for funding several other museums and cultural centres. Kamran Diba was appointed director of the Museum which was devoted to collecting works by international Western artists ranging from the Impressionists of the last century to the Minimalists

[297]Emami, Op.cit., p.641-2.
[298]Diba, Op.cit., p.155.

and the Conceptualists of the 1970s. The Museum consisted of several departments including painting, sculpture, works on paper, graphic art, photography and architecture. The extensive budget that was allocated by the Museum to accumulate Western masterpieces is an indication of the extent of the Westernization of art that took place in Iran before the 1978 Islamic Revolution. The Museum was planning on building a permanent, in-depth collection of modern Iranian works when its activities came to halt with the outbreak of the Islamic Revolution. After the Revolution, the activities of the Museum shifted from international art to revolutionary propaganda, although it has recently re-installed part of its permanent collection. Rotating exhibitions as well as temporary shows by prominent Iranian artists are currently held. They stress photography and graphics which mainly consist of pro-revolutionary posters.[299]

Teaching of Art.

In 1911, Kamal-al-Mulk established the first School of Fine Arts in Tehran (Madrasa-ye Ṣanāyeʿ Mostaẓrifa) as we have seen. He became its director until his retirement in 1928. Art classes at the new school followed Western techniques and students were trained in these new styles in preference to traditional ones. The academic training they received was based on a naturalistic figurative technique that depicted the minutest detail in a photography-like rendering. This approach gained such popularity that it persisted from the 1920s until the mid-1940s. The students and graduates of the Madrasa ignored the new art trends in Europe, such as Cubism, Surrealism, Expressionism, and Abstraction. The so called 'modern' Iranian artists worked in oils and water-colours, painting Iranian subjects of family

[299]Ibid, p.155.

gatherings, street scenes, landscapes and floral still-lifes in their newly-discovered academic style. Less serious painters made copies of central European landscapes depicting snow clad mountains, scenic lakes, and castles with green pastures in the foreground.[300]

Four years after Tehran University was established in 1934, it opened its School of Fine Art where a number of Kamal-al-Mulk's disciples took up key positions. For almost a decade, they managed to hold back the advent of modern Post-impressionist schools. Miniature painting in the Safavid style was also practised by this school of artists.[301]

In 1961, the School of Decorative Arts (Madrasa-ye honārha-ye tazyīnī), was created, mainly for graduates of Secondary Schools of Fine Arts for boys and girls who had been refused admission into the School of Fine Arts at Tehran University. The School of Decorative Arts gave diplomas in applied arts such as interior decoration and graphics. A number of its graduates successfully established themselves which made some critics rate it higher than the School of Fine Arts in training artists. Unlike their peers at the School of Fine Arts, the first teachers at the School of Decorative Arts were instrumental in fostering a less formal approach regarding choice of subject-matter and media treatment.[302] In the late 1970s, the College of Fine Arts expanded its programme and employed a number of prominent artists on its faculty.[303] Meanwhile, the government intensified its programme of sending more students to European art schools.[304]

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[300]Emami, Op.cit., p.641.
[301]Ibid, p.641.
[302]Ibid, p.642.
[303]Diba, Op.cit., p.154.
[304]Emami, Op.cit., p.642.

Art Galleries.

Several art galleries opened in the 1960s and early 1970s in Tehran which had the effect of stimulating artistic activities. The short-lived *Club Rasht 29* was founded by the architect, painter, collector and art sponsor, Kamran Diba, the sculptor Parviz Tanavoli and Roxanna Saba. It was a place where painters, actors, musicians and writers could meet to discuss their work and attend programmes of poetry reading, informal theatre performances and musical recitals. It held the first auction of contemporary art in Iran which was attended by Empress Farah Pahlavi and Prime Minister Hoveyda,[305] both of whom were among the most prominent collectors in Iran. Foreign cultural societies and centres such as the Iran-American Society and the Goethe Institute also held regular exhibitions for local artists.[306]

Local Trends in Art.

Since the 1950s, Iranian artists have sought a local style in art that would distinguish their work from current international trends. The first attempts to give Western styles local features was through the artists' choices of 'Iranian' themes. For example, peasants and chadur clad women were painted in Cubist or other well-known European styles. In addition, some of the works incorporated motifs borrowed from ancient reliefs of Persepolis and Islamic manuscripts. The interpretation of local subject-matter through Western techniques was not always successful nor was it appreciated by the Biennale juries. Some artists grew tired of emulating Western trends and sought to establish a school of Persian painting whereby they could assert

[305]Diba, Op.cit., p.154.
[306]Emami, Op.cit., p.642.

their individuality and cultural identity. They were encouraged by the cultural establishment which hoped to foster the emergence of a national school of art.[307]

Prior to the Islamic Revolution, the Iranian government pursued a dual path in its quest for modernization. On the one hand, it spared no effort in pushing the country into the mainstream of Western culture and technology, and on the other, it tried hard to evoke the people's pride in their ancient past. This pride manifested itself through celebrations such as that held by the Shah in Persepolis in 1971, on the occasion of the 2500th anniversary since Cyrus had founded the first Iranian empire. As for the Islamic tradition in the country, a concerted effort by the government to ignore and even push it into obscurity continued until the Revolution. In spite of the official Pahlavi policy that tried to obscure religion and the role of Islamic culture, the only original modern trend in Iranian art resulted from an inquiry into Shi'ite heritage and religious rites which fostered the beginning of a national artistic identity. Thus, the Saqqah-khaneh School was created. The saqqah-khāneh is a small public water fountain found in the old quarters of every town and village in Iran. It is set in a recessed niche with a cistern and a brass bowl, where passers by may help themselves to a cool drink. It is similar to the sabīl, and is built by individuals as an act of piety and benevolence to commemorate Imam Hussein's martyrdom. Hussein, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad and the third Shi'ite Imam, was killed at Karbala, during a battle with the Umayyad army (680 AD) after being tortured for two hot and waterless days. Thus, the saqqah-khāneh is regarded as a holy place where vows are made and candles are often kept burning. The pious also display green and black drapes around it, and engrave decorative signs and verses

[307]Diba, Op.cit., p.152.

from the Qur'an on its protective wrought-iron grillwork and sides of the cistern. The whole setup is a specimen of popular religious art. The main propagators of the Saqqah-khaneh trend were Hosseyn Zenderoudi, Faramarz Pilarman, Mas'ud Arabshahi, Sadeq Tabrizi, Mansur Qadriz, Parviz Tanavoli, Naser Ovisi and Jazeh Tabataba'i. They drew on Iran's Shi'ite cultural and religious heritage, using traditional folk motifs and Arabic calligraphy and they blended them within modern compositions, executed in Western techniques (figs. 68, 69, 70).[308]

Since the Islamic Revolution, official patronage of avant-garde art has ceased and works following the latest Western styles are not displayed. Instead, the Tehran Museum of Contemporary art has exhibited naturalistic works in the style of Kamāl-al-Mulk, as well as propagandist or revolutionary works and surrealist paintings illustrating the theme of martyrdom with elements similar to those used by the Saqqah-khaneh artists. The only style that did not suffer a set back was calligraphic painting. Meanwhile, most art galleries closed down, museums halted their activities to revise their policies and a number of established artists left the country.

[308]There will be a detailed study of the Saqqah-khaneh School in chapter 15.

Chapter 10.

Syria.

Damascus has been famous for its traditional crafts as far back as the Umayyad period in the 8th century. Since at least the mid-19th century, however, these crafts have experienced little growth or evolution in traditional designs and forms. Craftsmen working in metalwork, inlaying, weaving and woodwork repeated ad infinitum the old forms and motifs but for all their dexterity and skill they showed no innovation. The lack of development in Islamic crafts, along with the strong influences coming from abroad, was the background for the penetration of Western artistic styles and aesthetics into Syria.

Wall painting has been practiced in Damascus, the regional capital of Bilād al-Shām, since the 16th century. The earliest example is found in the Berlin State Museum and consists of wood panels from an Aleppo room which date to 1600. More recent examples are the 1737 wall panels in the Qasr al-ʿAzim in Damascus, and those of Qasr al-ʿAzim at Hama which date to 1830. Other painted wall panels can be found in old Damascene residences such as Dār al-Sibaʿī, Dār al-Mujallad, Dār Ḥūrānīya and Dār Jabrī. In Aleppo, similar paintings are found in Dār al-Dallāl and Bayt Ajiqbāsh as well as the Kaylānīya in Hama. The themes of the painted wooden wall panels are analogous to Ottoman examples in Turkey. Private homes and public baths had murals depicting flower bouquets and vases, fruit bowls, sea views, and landscapes and townscapes of Istanbul, Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem which were totally devoid of human figures. The

artisans who made these sorts of paintings were anonymous decorators, whom we only know by their signatures. The most famous were Abu Sulayman al-Khayat, his sons, and his two assistants, Ahmad Mahfud and Nadir Odabashi,[309]

Painting on ceramic tiles was also found with large murals made up of small individual, colour glazed square tiles depicting views of Mecca and Medina or merely floral and geometric decorations. Two known artists of painted ceramics are Muhammad al-Dimashki who has one work dating to 1726 in the Islamic Museum in Cairo, and Fāḍil bin ʿAlī bin ʿUmar al-Dāhir al-Zabadānī al-Ṣafadī (1760-?) who was famous for his landscapes.[310]

Three other common types of painting in Syria in the second half of the 19th century were Christian church icons, and painting on glass and on textiles. Icon painting may well have developed in Syria during the Byzantine period and continued into the 19th century. Yūsuf al-Muṣṣawir and his son Niʿmat al-Halbīyan were two Syrian artists who developed a local style derived from indigenous tradition in the early 18th century. Between 1809 and 1821, the Greek painter Michel al-Krītī lived in Syria and trained local artists, initiating a new Western trend in icon painting which evinced greater skill in figuration. Among the well-known Syrian icon painters were Jurjī al-Mussawir, Niʿmat Nasir al-Ḥumṣī, and Butrus al-ʿAjamī who left a number of iconnographic paintings done in an impersonal naïve style.[311] The icon painters were minor clergy of simple stock who painted to satisfy their religious needs and those of their parishioners, and not to attain fame through

[309]A. Bahnassi, "Taṭawūr al-fan al-sūrī khilāl mi'at ʿām", HAAS, vol.23, parts 1&2, 1973, pp.11-2.
[310]Ibid, p.14.
[311]Ibid, pp.14-5.

their art.[312] There is a wealth of local icons in churches throughout Syria, though a full survey of them has never been undertaken.

The second type of painting, on glass, may have been introduced by the Ottomans into Syria. These plates are illustrations of popular stories such as *A Thousand and One Nights*, *ʿAntar and ʿAbla*, *Abū Qasim al-Ṭanbūrī* and *al-Zīr Sālim*. They were based on folk literature which extolled courage, love, chivalry, generosity, and faithfulness, albeit poorly written in a colloquial Arabic that was recited by the Ḥakawātī.[313] Unlike painted murals, glass paintings included human and animal figures, and often depicted a mounted hero and fighting scenes. They were usually hung in coffee-houses and shops in the old sūq, and were painted on the reverse side of a glass pane, in bright, primary colours and a simple naïve style without any consideration for depth and anatomy. The painter usually wrote the name of the depicted personage above his or her picture. People commissioned popular painters to make copies of the originals. Some copies were carefully executed, while others were badly done. Mutwalli, Muhammad ʿAlī al-Mussawir (1880-1963), Ḥarb al-Tīnāwī (1883-1973), and his son Ṣubḥī are among the best-known glass painters. Al-Tīnāwī continued to make glass paintings until he died, selling them to collectors and tourists for a nominal price. A shy and modest person, he was oblivious of his fame, refused to talk to journalists, and hardly took notice of the exhibitions of his works that his customers mounted in Beirut and Paris.[314]

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[312]Ibid, p.18.

[313]The ḥakawātī was a story teller who moved between popular coffee-houses at fixed times, usually in the evening, to entertain the customers. It would take him several days, sometimes weeks, to end a story, in order to secure the continuous presence of his audience.

[314]Bahnassi, "Taṭawūr", Op.cit., pp.12-3.

The third style of visual art in 19th century Syria was the practice of painting on textiles, a craft of long standing in the area. These stylized pictures are usually painted on calico in bright colours, and, like painting on glass, they are concerned with popular stories and their heroes.[315] They were also used to decorate coffee-houses, shops and private homes of the lower classes.

Syria experienced the first European influences through Ottoman art. As early as the end of the 18th century, European influenced Ottoman decorative styles in wall painting started to appear in the houses of Aleppo and Damascus. Local artists gradually turned to Western art styles and adapted them to their native art forms. By the late 19th century, it was common for Syrian notables and politicians to have their portraits painted, and imaginary landscapes painted in pastiche, postcard style also began to appear on the walls of their houses. A painter of such works was Bishara al-Samra, an early portrait painter who also made religious paintings.[316] However, the first painters to adopt Western techniques were anonymous amateurs who practiced their art in a copied manner far from the limelight, leaving no recorded information on them or their work.

By the 20th century, painting became alienated from its traditional locale of murals, books and the surfaces of artifacts such as lamps, vases and other utensils. Free-standing easel painting gradually became the norm.[317] The early beginnings of a Western-style art movement in Syria came much later than in Lebanon and took about four decades to gain momentum. Two

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[315]Ibid, p.14.
[316]M. Hammad, Nash'at al-fann al-tashkīlī al-muʿasir fi'l qutr al-ʿarabī al-sūrī, unpublished manuscript, p.3.
[317]T. al-Sharif, "Syria", Contemporary Art from the Islamic World, pp.253-4.

styles in art have influenced the earliest known Syrian painters: the Ottoman classical style of copying nature, and the Orientalist style of the Western painters who visited the Levant. At times the two fused into an early Syrian type of representation. The best known artist since the Ottoman period was Tawfiq Tariq (1875-1945). A soldier-painter born to a Turkish father and Damascene mother, he was influenced by his many Turkish artist-friends and his military training in Istanbul. He was a gifted architect, decorator, cartoonist and painter whose early repertoire was limited to portraits of well-known personalities and to landscapes, meticulously copied from prints and photographs. He was the first artist to use oil paints and became famous among high officials who paid him handsomely for their portraits. In 1923, he was sent by the French Mandate authorities on a scholarship to study architecture in Paris. After this trip, the Ottoman influence in his work was replaced by the academic style, keeping him outside the circle of the modern art movements that were current in France, including Impressionism. He also painted landscapes of Damascene scenes (which he sometimes made on the spot), and imaginary tableaus of famous battles and historical events. Tariq moved freely between Jerusalem, Haifa, Sidon, and Beirut. His fame preceded him everywhere he went, and he would be asked by town notables to make their portraits. When he went on pilgrimage, he became the first modern artist from his country to paint the Prophet's Mosque in Medina.[318] A skilled and precise figurative painter, he paid great attention to the minutest details in his documentary-like works (fig. 71). Tariq is considered the earliest pioneer of modern Syrian art. Through his strong personality and

[318]Bahnassi, Ruwwād al-fann al-ḥadīth fī'l-bilād al-ʿarabīyah, pp.58-9.

skill, he was able to win the public's admiration and respect and to impose his style on the works of the students he trained in his Damascus studio.[319]

Munib al-Naqshabandi (1890-1960) was another early pioneer. In his home town of Aleppo, he owned a studio where he offered painting lessons. Nothing else of significance is known of al-Naqshabandi's private life. His painting, *The Entry of the Arab Army into Aleppo,* depicting King Faisal's armies marching into his home town after ending Turkish rule in 1981, was the first work to deal with a contemporary subject related to an important national event. This became a model emulated by his students. Meanwhile, several other young artists, contemporaries of both Tariq and al-Naqshabandi, worked on their own in the same academic style,[320] they included Nadim Bakhash and Nadim Naqshabandi in Aleppo; Abdul Hamid Abd Rabu, Abdul Wahab Abul Su'ud, Michele Kirsheh, George Khoury, Khalid Ma'ad and Said Tahseen in Damascus; and Subhi Shua'ib in Hims.[321]

Orientalist and Impressionist Influences.

With the end of Turkish rule in 1918, King Faisal, the son of Sharif Hussein bin Ali of Mecca, ruled over an Arab government in Syria from March 8th to July 25, 1920 when French armies defeated Faisal's troops and the country fell under the French Mandate until its independence in 1946.[322] The years between 1920 and independence witnessed the profound influence in Syria of the French Orientalist painting and Impressionism. The former recorded historical events with particular emphasis on detail, while the latter took the artists out of their studios into nature and gave priority to colour and

[319]Al-Sharif, Op.cit., p.254 and Hammad, Op.cit., p.3.
[320]Bahnassi, Ruwwād al-fann, pp.58-9.
[321]al-Sharif, Op.cit., p.254.
[322]Hitti, History of the Arabs, p.752.

light. These influences were exerted through visiting French artists such as Pignon who painted a number of works during his visit, and Vernet who spent his military service in Syria (Baudelaire called him the military artist). Jean Carzou, a Frenchman born in Aleppo, in 1905, of an Armenian-Syrian father who was a photographer, also influenced local art. After his father's death, Carzou left to Paris where he established himself. He made frequent visits to Syria and Lebanon, often exhibiting his work there.[323]

Maurice Denis visited Damascus in 1921 while Van Dongen, Kandinsky and Kokoschka also made short trips to the country. During the mandate, Syria's High Commissioner, General Weigand, invited the painter Jean Charles Duval and awarded him a scholarship to the Institut Français de l'Art Islamique in Damascus. Duval recorded different parts of Damascus and its environs in his paintings as well as the Castle in Aleppo and other Syrian landscapes and cities including Hama and Hims. A second French artist who also sojourned for some time in Syria was Michelet; he made a considerable number of paintings before leaving in 1946.[324] Although there is no record of their having trained young local artists, the foreign painters were instrumental in introducing Western painting into Syria.

The influence of Impressionism reached Syria in the interim through indigenous artists who had gone to Europe on scholarships, as well as visiting foreign artists. The first artists to free painting from its blind imitation of nature and search for a distinctive individual style were Abdul Wahāb Abul Su'ūd, Sa'īd Tahseen, and Mohammad Jalal. Abdul Wahāb Abul Su'ūd (1897-1951) was born in Nablus in Palestine. He moved with his father, an officer in the Turkish army, to Sidon and Beirut before going to

[323]Bahnassi, HAAS, p.16.
[324]Ibid. p.16.

Cairo to study art and to practice his hobby of acting. In 1914, he settled in Damascus where he married and became a secondary school teacher of painting and drama. He later went to the Académie Julian in Paris, and frequented the studio of Le Doux Chauviak where he took painting lessons. The influence of Tariq on Abul Su'ūd's early works is evident. He painted historical events such as the Arab conquest of Spain in a detailed figurative manner. He also used historical events as subjects for the plays he wrote. In thirty years of teaching painting, Abul Su'ūd instilled in his students his preference for nationalistic subjects [325] and a certain freedom from rigid academic rules.

Sa'īd Tahseen (1904-1986) was a self taught artist who, as a child, had witnessed the great famine that befell Damascus between 1914 and 1918. This catastrophe greatly affected him and was reflected in his work. His subject matter was divided between townscapes of old Damascus, with its narrow streets, traditional houses, popular wedding ceremonies, and historical and current events, and historical and humanitarian themes such as the battles of Yarmuk and Qadissiya, the founding of the Arab League, and scenes of hunger and poverty. During the 1950s, Tahseen attained official recognition and his works filled the walls of the Presidential Palace, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Syrian embassies abroad. His narrative style, with bright impressionistic colours, had a naïve quality attributed to his lack of formal training (fig. 72). He paid little attention to perspective and concentrated instead on the sound construction of the composition. Tahseen was able to make a living from his art, and in 1943 became the first artist to establish an artistic society in Syria, the Arab Society of Fine Arts.[326]

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[325]Bahnassi, Ruwwād al-fann, pp.60-1
[326]Ibid, pp.63-4.

Mahmoud Jalal (1911-1975) was of Libyan origin who moved to Damascus with his family when he was thirteen years old. In 1936, the Italian government awarded him (along with Salah Nashif, Rashad Qusaibati and Suhail Ahdab), an art scholarship to Rome. He was a painter and probably the first Syrian sculptor, and worked on figurative subjects in both art forms. Most of his subjects were inspired by the countryside, family life, and social and nationalistic events. They were executed in an academic style which could be related to 18th century Italian painting (fig. 73). He designed a number of medals and worked as an art teacher in Dayr al-Zūr and Damascus before becoming assistant director at the College of Fine Arts.[327]

The two most prominent early impressionist artists were Michel Kirsheh (1900-1973) and George Khoury (1916-1975). Kirsheh was a prolific artist who went to Paris and was greatly influenced by French Impressionism which he adopted in depicting the environs and streets of Damascus. Impressionism was also the focus of the painting lessons he taught in secondary schools, which left an indelible imprint on a generation of students. Khoury was a self-taught artist who also promoted Impressionism through teaching in different secondary schools. Along with other self-taught artists such as Abdul Hamid Abd Rabu, Subhi Shu'aib, Ramzia Zumbarakchi, Khaled al-Assali, Ghalib Salem, Farid Bakhash and Khalid Ma'ad, he made every effort to introduce art to the general public and to gain its acceptance.[328]

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[327]Ibid, pp.67-8.
[328]Ibid, p. 56, al-Sharif, Op.cit., p.255.

Early Artistic Activities.

This first generation of pioneers formed small groups that held sporadic exhibitions which were encouraged by some foreign missions and embassies. The first group exhibition in Syria took place in 1928 as part of the *Exhibition of Ancient and Modern Crafts*. It was followed by a second one during the Damascus Fair of 1936.[329]

Prior to World War II, Mussolini's government in Italy had offered Syrian students a group scholarship, and so Mahmoud Jalal, Salah al-Nashif, Rashad Qusaibati and Suhail Ahdab went to Italy to study art. The Italian government hoped to disseminate Italian culture in Syria, but this was not welcomed by the French authorities, however, and they put a halt to all further scholarships. In 1938, the first group of students returned from Italy just as the government sent a second group (comprising of Nasir Shoura, Nazim Jaʿfari and Sharif Orfali) to Egypt for their art training. Members of both groups became pedagogue-artists who were instrumental in shaping the modern art movement in Syria.[330] Until the end of the 1930s, Syria produced a very limited number of painters. Most artists who were active during the inter-war period had studied in Paris or Rome and had returned with a purely academic concept. Those who embraced Impressionism did so at a time when it was already passé in the West.

Art Groups and Exhibitions.

By the 1940s, artists started to sense a need for more organized associations that would give their work the importance it deserved. They

[329]Bahnassi, Ruwwād, p.56, al-Sharif Op.cit., p.255.
[330]Bahnassi, Ruwwād, p.56-7, Bahnassi, Al-fann al-ḥadith fi'l-bilād al-ʿarabīyah, pp.52-3.

realized the necessity for specialized exhibition space and the significance of spreading art education and appreciation among the public. They first joined other existing clubs such as the House of National Music (dār al-mūsīqa al-waṭanīyah) which contained a fine arts branch. It was replaced a few years later by the Damascus National Club for Sports (al-nādī al-rīyaḍī al-waṭanī) whose art section held an independent group exhibition for foreign and local artists in 1941 at the Law Institute. Young artists from the two clubs joined to form a new group, Studio Veronese, that same year. They chose a green paint tube (vert Veronese) as their emblem. The only art education accessible to artists at the time came from the few available art books and periodicals, and the occasional foreign exhibition that came to Damascus, such as the Polish Exhibition held at Hotel l'Orient in 1944. This show introduced modern art to Syrian artists. Studio Veronese became the nucleus for the Arab Society of Fine Arts which was established in 1943 and offered art lessons at its center. In 1944, the new society held a major group exhibition at the Institut Laïque. It included Syrian artists from all over the country as well as foreign resident artists.[331]

Meanwhile, a widespread political movement in the country called for an independent Syria. Simultaneously, one of the earliest nationalistic art manifestations took place after French soldiers attacked and burnt the Parliament building, killing its Syrian police garrison. Several members of the Arab Society depicted the incident in their paintings. They also painted large, symbolic works portraying the colonial authorities' mistreatment of the people, and carried them in a demonstration organized in commemoration of the first anniversary of the evacuation of French troops from Syria.[332]

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[331]Bahnassi, Ruwwād, p. 56, al-Sharif, Op.cit., p.255.
[332]M.Hammad, Tajārib shakhṣīya fī'l-fann al-tashkīlī, unpublished manuscript, p.2.

The long years of World War II brought suffering in the form of severe rationing of food and other materials, while internal resistance to the French occupation became increasingly violent. The public was indifferent to modern art. With very rare exceptions, art appreciation among the affluent was limited to collecting traditional Islamic pieces such as Persian carpets, Syrian inlaid furniture, Islamic artifacts, and Chinese porcelain. These collectibles were simultaneously utilitarian and a means of investment, while paintings and sculptures were regarded as worthless because they were inexpensive and did not serve any purpose. Modern artists worked under difficult conditions, without any support from the public and those who persevered did so out of dedication and belief in their profession.

Realism and figurative art were the norm among Syrian artists. Painters who wanted to work from life had to get written permission from the authorities, otherwise they would be subject to various forms of harassment. Furthermore, art supplies were difficult to find. At times, artists had to improvise to be able to work at all. They used to grind natural colour granules used for house painting, mix them with linseed oil, and fill the mixture into empty toothpaste tubes. Instead of canvas, they used empty wooden tea boxes, broke them down and, after preparing the surface, painted on the boards. In the later stages of the war, some artists managed to get a permit from the Supply Authority to buy wood for their paintings, just like carpenters.[333]

Matters improved with the end of the war and in 1948, a major exhibition of the Paris School was held at the Institut Laïque in Damascus and included works by Picasso, Modigliani and Van Dongen.[334] Through

[333]Ibid, pp.2-3.
[334]Bahnassi, HAAS, p.17.

this exhibition, Syrian artists were further exposed to modern Western art trends.

The formation of artistic societies has continued since the 1950s. The Society of Art Lovers, whose founders were intellectuals and artists including Michel Kirsheh and Nasir Shoura, was founded in 1950. In 1965, the Syrian Artists Association was established and comprised practising painters and sculptors among its membership. Art societies were formed in Syria's other major cities as well. In Aleppo, an artistic society was founded in 1956. Its most important contribution to local artists was the opening of the Assarian Academy where the Syrian-Armenian artist, Kaplan, offered art classes for budding local talent. In Hama, a similar society started in 1955, offering regular painting classes by the painter Suhail Ahdab. The Circle of Social Totality and the Arts was founded in Damascus in 1961, replacing the Artists Association, while the Society of Friends of Art was formed in 1963 and remains active today.

All the artistic associations played an important role in the development of modern art in Syria. They created venues and opportunities for young artists, writers and poets to meet, exchange ideas and opinions, and to develop new concepts. New painting engendered a heated discussion among the members, although the artists who were driven by their love of art, hardly received any income from selling their work.

Infiltration of Modern Trends.

The end of France's Mandate over Syria in 1946 marked the beginning of an active modern art movement which witnessed rapid development in the plastic arts. New talent started to appear after the war. Syrian artists concentrated on local subjects and indigenous qualities, thereby fostering a

closer rapport with the public. Art became more generally appreciated as the public began to look more favourably upon painting and sculpture. Though the prevalent style was still Impressionism, it grew local characteristics through the choice of a subject matter that depicted scenery from the countryside and the old quarters of Damascus and other Syrian cities. The public's preference for this kind of representation was reflected in its popularity. Other styles such as Surrealism also appeared, and through which highly symbolic works were created. However, Surrealism was never widely accepted and realism continued to dominate the art scene.[335]

A second generation of pioneers appeared in the 1950s, providing the Syrian art movement its motivation and momentum. At an early age, Nasir Shoura (1920-1992) had rebelled against his family tradition of becoming a doctor or a pharmacist, and showed an early inclination towards art. In 1939, he left to Italy to pursue his art studies but was obliged to return because of the war. Between 1943 and 1947, he joined the School of Fine Arts in Cairo. In 1950/51, he went to Paris and Italy to gain a first-hand knowledge of art movements in Europe.[336] Shoura believed in the concept of "art for art's sake" and was the leader of Syrian Impressionism which he continued to promote among his secondary school students and later at the College of Fine Arts in Damascus.[337] The majority of his work consisted mainly of impressionistic, Syrian countryside landscapes, and until 1960, he was the major artist of that style. This was followed by an abstract period that lasted until 1980 when his shapes changed into a sort of vegetal abstraction though his colours remained those of the Impressionists, soft and radiant. His latest

[335]al-Sherif, Op.cit., p.255.
[336]Nasir Shoura file from the Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.
[337]Bahnassi, Ruwwad, pp.79-80.

stage expressed an individual modern realism which focused once again on Syrian villages. In muted colours, Shoura built up organically patterned surfaces that made up his stones, earth, and nature (fig. 74).

Fateh Moudarres (b.1922) is one of the leaders of the modern art movement in Syria. After finishing his secondary education, he became an English teacher. Moudarres always carried a box of coloured crayons in his pocket. He would create compositions and paint landscapes then scrape the colours with a razor blade, a technique never before used in Syria. A poet, novelist, painter and sculptor, he is well-versed in art history and philosophy. After an early period of realism, he became, in the 1940s and 1950s, a surrealist painter who explained every work to his public with literary verse and prose. Between 1954 and 1960, Moudarres studied at the Academia di Belle Arte in Rome. After returning from Europe, he developed a highly personal expressionist style which he called 'surrealistic and figurative with a strong element of abstraction'. His subjects were influenced by Syria's classical traditions with which he became familiar in the halls of the National Museum of Damascus. Before leaving to Paris to study at the École des Beaux Arts, between 1969 and 1972, he passed through a period close to abstraction, in both style and subject matter,[338] although since 1967, his themes have become political without losing their personal language of symbols and legends (fig. 75). A painter with an accomplished sense of composition and balance of colour, Moudarres has trained generations of artists in his classes at the College of Fine Arts in Damascus.

Adham Ismail (1922-1963) started as a self taught artist and was sent to Italy on an art scholarship in 1952. He also visited France, Spain, and

[338]Contemporary Art from the Islamic World, p131, T. Al-Charif "Al-Moudarres Fateh, Art Contemporain Arabe Collection du Musée d'Institut du Monde Arabe, p.78.

Austria to enhance his artistic education. Ismail passed through several phases in his short artistic life, and was among the first Syrian artists to look for a genuine Arab identity in his work. He began painting as an impressionist then moved to Fauvism, Futurism, Surrealism and finally Abstraction, emphasizing his lines which followed arabesque curvature. In harmony with his humanitarian and nationalistic subjects, his colours were bold enough to strike the viewer with their sharpness and directness. Ismail was one of the earliest Syrian artists to call for an Arab school of art,[339] and one of the first to liberate his work of realism. He used a spontaneous, indefinite line borrowed from Islamic decorations, and employed it with pure colours.

Besides the three artists mentioned above, Salah Nashif, Rashad Qusaibati, Robert Malki, Nazim Ja'bari, and Fathi Muhammad are also considered among the second generation of Syrian pioneers and the catalysts of the modern art movement. Most of them trained either in Egypt or Italy and worked in the field of art education where they benefitted their students with their experience, and searched for individual styles through personal experiments and research. Between 1938 and 1960, they were active in forming artistic societies that played an important role in educating the public about art appreciation. Through this group of artists, the art movement graduated from its former realistic stage with its simple intellectual background to an advanced stage that tried to construct its own cultural personality.

Borrowing from Arab-Islamic traditions continues among a group of Syrian artists who draw on calligraphy, miniatures, folk art and the arabesque. Artists combine these traditions with others and reintroduce them

[339]Bahnassi, Ruwwād, pp.71-3.

from a new perspective and context in different styles (among which Abstraction is foremost).

Elias Zayyat (b.1935) started his art studies in Sofia and then continued in Cairo (1958-1962). His early works were realistic and carefully recorded the details of very rigid figures.[340] In 1965, he moved towards a poetic Expressionism in his nudes and portraits, discarding the restraints of his academic training. By 1966, he broke into monochrome abstractions which sometimes included local decorative motifs inspired by Damascene woodwork. Since 1967, he has been gradually reverting to a hybrid style which mixes realism and Abstraction in an epic vision that unites poetry and popular legends with political and philosophical symbols. He also draws on techniques and shapes found in the icons of the Eastern church to express his politics and philosophy concerning national and humanitarian issues. Zayyat's paintings constitute a separate world which includes its own vocabulary, symbols and an autonomous vision.

Nazir Nabaʿa (b.1938) was affected by the early Syrian impressionists before travelling to Cairo (1959-1965) to study art. While working as an art teacher in Dayr al-Zūr, he became fascinated with popular traditions and ancient legends. Back in Damascus, he taught at the College of Fine Arts and painted political works and posters before going to Paris to continue his art studies at the École des Beaux Arts. In Paris, his research drove him to an obsession with floral detail and vegetal motifs, through which he expressed the concepts he chose with great simplicity and symbolic profundity. After returning to Damascus, he once again joined the faculty of the College of Fine Arts.[341] His work has since began to reveal an original artistic

[340]Al-Charif, "Zayyat, Elias", Art Contemporain Arabe, p.170.
[341]Ibid, p.144.

personality that represents all his inner experiences through a symbolic figuration which pays particular attention to detail. Naba'a's new compositions include women as the centre of the painting, surrounded by traditional motifs of jewelry, furniture, costumes, fruits and flowers, and are executed with great precision and charged with symbolic messages.

Nasha'at Zu'bi (b.1939) represents complex issues in the two-dimensional perspective of Arabic miniatures that depict old houses, popular quarters and public baths. Ghayath al-Akhras (b.1937) draws on craft decorations incised on swords and woodwork to create his indigenous style. Ahmad al-Siba'i (1935-1988) imitated children's drawings to represent the problems of rural areas. Khuzaima Alwani (b.1934), who has studied at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, makes use of mythological monsters as symbols of evil that overpower man. Through a deceptively simple format and straight-forward technique, he presents humanity's dilemma between right and wrong, justice and injustice. Using universal themes, he draws from his society's past and present in a highly symbolic manner.

The Grounding of Modern Art in the Syrian Milieu.

After the Suez War of 1956, a widespread trend induced many Syrian artists to search for new styles and means by which they could confirm their national artistic individuality. In 1958, a union between Syria and Egypt was declared (1958-1961). Gamal Abdul Nassir's call for opposing the West had already found a strong response at almost every level of Syrian society. Artists started to reject Western art and look into their Arab-Islamic heritage to express their political and social views. However, they also realized that modern art trends could be linked to their own cultural heritage. Inspired by Western artists such as Henri Matisse and Paul Klee, who had rebelled

against their own classical Western art teachings, the heritage revival movement picked up momentum. Coupled with the political events and the general mood of the country, it induced artists to develop individual styles that led in several new directions.

In the early 1960s, a young group of artists started to surface. Their audacious experimentations enriched the modern art movement, opening new horizons for those who followed them. At this stage in the development of Syrian modern art, Impressionism was declining as two new styles gained predominance. The first trend was Expressionism and Abstract-expressionism; the second was Abstraction. Those who pursued Expressionism utilized newly discovered forms borrowed from their pre-Islamic classical heritage and re-introduced them in a modern Western style. Their adherents depicted political and social upheavals in Syria and the Arab world by using strong colours and distorted figurations in order to capture the general mood of the public and create a rapport with it. They linked their personal suffering and anguish with the general political climate and interpreted them in various Expressionistic styles. Expressionism continues to be popular among Syrian artists.

Subject matter in Syrian art became as important as the plastic formation of a painting. Most artists concentrated on the problems that were caused by the political and social changes taking place. Mamdouh Qashlan (b.1929), was a graduate of Rome's Academia di Belle Arte. He painted dislocated village women living in the city and drew on elements from primitive folk art to establish his artistic identity. Burhan Karkoutly (b.1937), an artist of Palestinian origin, portrayed mundane events in the

lives of simple people and used motifs from folk paintings to depict social and political themes.

The most tragic of the socio-political artists was Louai' Kayali (1934-1978). He started painting in 1945 and held his first exhibition in 1952 in his home town of Aleppo. After studying law temporarily, he was sent on a scholarship, in 1958, to the Academia di Belle Arte in Rome where he remained until 1961. A highly gifted person, Kayali, while still a student, won several awards and medals in Italy. He succeeded in developing a style distinguished by its strong and elegant lines which formed and defined his figures into well-balanced and tightly fitted compositions. Though some of his work might recall the social realism created in Russia, Kayali's massive figures were more humane. They did not imitate known clichés but evinced a distinctive individuality. He held his most important exhibition, *For the Cause*, in April 1967. It toured Syria's major cities and consisted of 30 black and white works in charcoal. The theme of the exhibition focused on the struggle of the Arab individual against his sad reality in immensely expressive compositions of tortured figures (fig. 76). The Six-Day war broke out in June of that year and resulted in Israel's victory and occupation of Arab territories. This political and military setback threw Kayali into a deep depression and pushed him to destroy his 30 displayed paintings. He never recovered from his depression and stopped working for years. He retired from his teaching post and went to live in Aleppo where he resumed work in seclusion.[342] In 1978, Kayali was burnt to death, having allegedly committed suicide.

The second major trend in Syrian art was Abstraction. It moved away from the national and personal levels while drawing mainly on calligraphy.

[342]M. Qashlan, Louai' Kayali, pp.65-7

Its advocate was Mahmoud Hammad, the first Syrian artist to abstract Arabic letters and include them in compositions as structural elements.[343]

Sami Burhan (b.1929) is a graduate in graphics and sculpture from Paris and Rome. An abstract artist, he has made use of Arabic characters in his works which deal with calligraphy as a compositional element. He is skilled in arranging colour tones and contrasts to enhance the geometry of his compositions and the luminosity of tone in his colours (fig. 77). Muhammad Ghannoum (b.1949) is a young calligraphic artist and a graduate of the College of Fine Arts in Damascus. He has re-employed traditional Arabic calligraphy in a modern rendition while using different classical scripts such as Kufic and Nastʿalīq in fluid and imaginative compositions. Though most of his words are legible, he has released them from their repeated traditional messages and incorporated in them contemporary connotations. Unlike traditional calligraphy, his colourful calligraphic compositions are animated and full of movement and depth (fig. 101).

Art Education and Patronage.

During the French Mandate, the authorities showed interest in the applied arts and opened a Department of Crafts at the Institut des Études Orientales (whose director at the time was J. Sauvaget). Craft Schools for boys and girls were later established in Damascus and Aleppo. In 1946, art and craft courses were added to the curricula of teachers training schools. Since independence, the government's interest in the arts has grown gradually. In 1950, fine art affairs were placed under the management of the Directorate-General for Archaeology and Museums which organized an annual Syrian group exhibition. In 1958, the Directorate was transformed

[343]Mahmoud Hammad will be discussed in chapter 17.

into a Ministry of Culture and National Guidance, with a separate Directorate for Fine Arts and took on the supervision of all artistic activities.[344] In 1959 and during the short lived union with Egypt, a college of Fine Arts was established, with Egyptian instructors forming the bulk of its faculty. It included departments for architectural design, painting, sculpture, etching and graphics, and was modelled on the College of Fine Arts in Cairo. The Department of Architectural Design moved to the College of Architecture in 1972, and the College of Fine Arts became part of Damascus University, with Syrians replacing non-Syrian Arabs and foreign teachers. More Syrian artists eventually found positions related to their training.[345]

In 1956, a new wing was added to the Damascus National Museum where a collection by prominent contemporary Syrian artists is permanently on display. Later on, similar wings for Syrian modern art were added to the national museums in Busra, Aleppo, Dayr al-Zūr and Raqqa.[346] Between 1963-80, the Ministry of Culture opened Fine Art Centres in all Syria's districts, muḥāfadāt, where a two-year course that does not require any prerequisites, is available free of charge. Anyone can attend and graduate with a diploma.[347] The Syrian government created a Cooperative Housing Society for Artists which assisted artists in building houses and studios for themselves.[348] The number of art exhibitions increased as government agencies took over the supervision of all artistic activities, establishing rules for major exhibitions, and collecting art works. The number of state and privately owned exhibition halls increased, allowing artists to communicate

[344]Bahnassi, HAAS, p.22-3.
[345]al-Sharif, Op.cit., p.257.
[346]Interview with Bashir Zuhdi, Damascus, 15/9/1992.
[347]Interview with Afif Bahnassi, Damascus, 17/9/1992.
[348]Bahnassi, HAAS, p.24.

with a larger public. Art criticism became an integral part of daily and weekly publications. Through informed critics, issues such as modernism versus traditionalism were discussed in the papers, arousing the interest and curiosity of the general public. The Union of Fine Arts was created in 1969. It included all working artists and began defending their rights and organizing the art movement. In cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, it launched a major annual exhibition at the Damascus National Museum which has been held regularly[349] under the patronage of President Hafiz al-Assad.

Like Iraq, Syria is ruled by the Socialist Baath Party. The annual exhibition in Syria is also governed by party politics and takes place on the party's anniversary. While the government does not manipulate art, its scope of cultural patronage is very limited, and it also does not tolerate dissidence from any artist. The personality cult has, however, influenced the arts as statues of al-Assad (made by established sculptors) have been erected in every city and town. Portraits of the President are de rigueur in every exhibition organized by any government body. However, unlike Iraq, official patronage is negligible and the standards of official cultural events are low.

By the end of the 1960s, the Syrian art movement had gone through much experimentation and research, attaining a level of maturity that helped crystallize its future development. Through official bilateral cultural agreements, the number of foreign exhibitions from abroad increased, as did local exhibitions held in newly-opened, private galleries. These kinds of activities, along with the steady improvement in art criticism, helped spread art appreciation among the public which built up a demand for works of art.

[349]al-Sharif, Op.cit., p.257.

In 1980, *Al-Ḥayāt al-Tashkīlīya*, a new art review dealing with art in Syria and the Arab world appeared.[350]

A number of expatriate Syrian artists chose to emigrate, mostly to the West (though some went to Lebanon). Marwan Qassab Bashi, Burhan Karkutli and Ibrahim Khuzaima live in Germany; Sami Burhan and Mustafa Yahya have settled in Italy; Ghayath al-Akhras, Sa'ad 'Arabi and Sakhr Farzat have established themselves in France; and Mukhlis al-Hariri and Ali Arnaout reside in the United States.[351] By contrast, Abdul Qadir al-Na'ib and Alfred Bakhash have gone to Beirut.

By this time, the second generation of pioneer artists had succeeded in establishing their own artistic language within a broad spectrum that included personal interpretation. These maturing artists had trained at the hands of the previous generation and their audacity gave the movement a new impetus.

The search for a national artistic identity reached its peak in Syria at the end of the 1960s. New trends appeared which mainly drew on local folk motifs and mythological characters taken from the country's classical and Islamic heritage. Yet artists were more concerned with a search for an Arab rather than an Islamic identity. The new trends were presented within a modern concept and through a new form of realism which was at times tinged with personal expressions. Arabic calligraphy, arabesque patterns, naïve folk painting, iconographic forms, handicraft designs on Damascene woodwork and metalwork, and archaeological figures from Busra and Palmyra were all utilized in the quest to create a uniquely Syrian art. Ancient legends, Christian icons of the Eastern church, popular traditions, Arabic

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[350]Ibid, p.257.
[351]Ibid, p.259.

miniatures and intertwined motifs used in local crafts became sources of inspiration for contemporary political and social symbolism. All these experimental efforts registered the artists' endeavours to personally express the conflicting political, social and economic realities that had spread throughout the Arab world.

The search for continuity between past and present in some way seems to revolve around depicting the land itself. Whenever Syrian artists have sought their identity, they have reverted to their surroundings which, in their eyes, embodied a strong sense of continuity. As one of the most ancient Arab cities, Damascus has always appealed to artists with its old quarters, classical architecture, and traditional environs. Since the beginning of the 20th century, painters have portrayed the old quarters of Damascus, Aleppo and other towns. In the 1970s, two different types of realism boldly emerged: the first sensitively delineated the local surroundings and archaeological sites in a style that emphasized the beauty of the country in great detail.

The second type of realism treated nationalistic and humanitarian subjects such as war, aggression, poverty, and oppression. It endeavored to seek out the connection between image and reality in an exaggerated manner. It chose to express an idea to the viewer instead of the accurate recording of visual imagery. It should be noted that under totalitarian and socialist regimes, some artists tend to over dramatize certain themes and national events in an attempt to please the authorities and market their art. This inevitably results in weak compositions and mediocre artistic standards.

Since its independence in 1946, Syria has experienced a series of political changes, including coup d'états, the multi-party system,

totalitarianism, socialism, military dictatorship, and one-party rule which have dramatically drawn artists into their country's politics. This kind of involvement has induced some to adopt Symbolism, Expressionism, Surrealism and Abstraction, by which they could express their conformity or dissent towards the system. On the whole, most Syrian artists seem to be obsessed by political and nationalistic issues, and their work is content-oriented. Those who chose to stay away from socio-political commentary have reverted to a realistic style in rendering landscapes, still-lifes and urban scenes. The outcome has been a dichotomy in artistic tendencies. The first is direct and realistic, characterized by straight forward recording of towns and landscapes. The second tendency is expressionistic and symbolic, following modern Western art styles. It has introduced its own aesthetic language and interpretations, combining heritage and past experience with present introspection. Followers of the second trend assert their artistic identity with thematic content.

Chapter 11.

Jordan.

Situated on the furthest outskirts of Istanbul's cultural umbrella, the only Ottoman artistic influences that reached Jordan while it was under Turkish rule were in architecture. Jordan's population was a mixture of nomadic Bedouins, peasants, and towns people during the Ottoman era. Its indigenous art forms were limited to local handicrafts consisting of textile and rug weaving, embroidery, niello work on silver (introduced by the Circassian emigrés), goldsmithing, pottery, painting on glass, woodcarving and calligraphy. Hardly any traces of Western art existed in the country.

Transjordan (modern Jordan) was founded in 1921 by Amir Abdullah, the son of the Hashemite leader of the Arab Revolt, Sharif Hussein bin Ali of Mecca. Like Palestine and Iraq, it passed under British Mandate in 1922 while Lebanon and Syria were mandated to France. Transjordan faced the formidable task of building a modern infrastructure with limited natural resources. Upon its independence in 1948, the Emirate of Transjordan became the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Origins of Modern Art.

In the 1920s and 1930s a few artists came to live in Transjordan. It was through them that the initial seeds of modern art were sown. The Lebanese pioneer Omar Onsi (1901-1969) was the first of these. He came to Amman in 1922, and at the request of Amir Abdullah, remained until 1926, teaching English to the Amir's two sons, Talal (later King Talal) and Nayef. At the time, Onsi was only 21 years old and had no formal art training.

During his stay, he painted watercolours of the desert and the Jordan valley which he later presented as part of his portfolio to the Académie Julian in Paris where he was accepted. However, he never trained any local talent.

Ziyaeddin Suleiman (1880-1945) was a self-taught Turkish painter who moved to Amman in 1930. He painted Jordanian landscapes and portraits in a classical manner with impressionistic overtones (fig. 78). As a writer who contributed to the local papers and periodicals, he befriended many intellectuals and politicians, of whom one was Amir Abdullah. The Amir, who was himself a man of letters, convinced Suleiman to settle in Amman permanently. Suleiman held the first one-person exhibition in the country in 1938 at Amman's Philadelphia Hotel. It was a great success and almost all his works were sold, although this appreciation on the part of the public was more for the personality and standing of the artist than for his art.

The third early painter to come to Jordan was the Russian George Aleef (1887-1970) who lived in Palestine after fleeing from the Bolshevik Revolution. In 1948, he arrived in Amman with the Palestinian refugees and started teaching Russian and painting at his home. A number of art amateurs became his students, including Muhanna Durra and Rafik Lahham. In 1967, he moved to Beirut where he spent his last three years. Aleef was the only early artist to train and improve local talent. He made numerous landscapes of Palestine and Jordan, and recorded scenes from Jerusalem and other cities, as well as Russian landscapes recalled from memory. He adhered to an academic realism with naive overtones in his paintings (fig. 79).

The last of the early artists, Ihsan Idilbi (b.1924), is a self-taught painter of Syrian origin. He moved to Amman with his family and painted Jordanian and Syrian landscapes and townscapes in a studied, naïve manner. During one of his sojourns in Damascus in 1955, he met the Syrian

impressionist painter Michel Kirsheh. After working with Kirsheh, his colours softened and his strokes took up impressionistic overtones. In the 1940s and 1950s, Idilbi was quite an active participant and organizer of exhibitions such as the first group show he arranged at Amman's Ahli Club in 1942.[352]

The outstanding contribution of the early artists to the modern art movement in Jordan was their effectiveness in introducing Western painting to the public and developing art appreciation among their friends and acquaintances. More than any other artist, Ziyaeddin Suleiman managed to familiarize the public with easel painting, introducing such work into Jordanian homes as part of wall decorations. Like Onsi, he was a personal friend of Amir Abdullah, and enjoyed royal patronage. The Royal Palace acquired many works by these early artists, a type of royal patronage quite rare for its time.

Palestinian Artists in Jordan.

At the outset of the first Arab-Israeli war and the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees poured into Jordan during the first few weeks of fighting. They were followed by thousands more, all in need of housing, basic services, employment and schooling. Jordan had to cope overnight with a population that had almost doubled and which depended only on its meagre resources and on foreign aid.

The annexation of the West Bank to Jordan in 1949 - the part of Palestine that was not occupied by the Israelis - joined the fate of the two peoples on the banks of the river Jordan. Among the refugees were many

[352]Interview with Ihsan Idilbi, Amman, 7/3/1991.

Palestinian artists who were given Jordanian citizenship. Others were born to parents of Palestinian origin living in Jordan, making it difficult to draw a sharp line between the Jordanian and Palestinian art movements from the 1950s onwards. West Bank artists came to Amman to exhibit their work, and Palestinian artists were employed by the Ministry of Education as art teachers at government schools and teachers' training colleges. Others (including Kamal Boullata, Afaf Arafat and Ahmad Nawash) were sent on government scholarships to study art in Italy, England and France. Even after the West Bank was occupied by Israel in 1967 and the declaration of an independent Palestinian government in 1988, many artists of Palestinian origin have chosen to be recognized as Jordanian.

Beginning of an Art Movement.

Early Jordanian artists of the post-1948 period were all self-taught amateurs who practised painting as a hobby. The first artistic activities started in the early 1950s through exhibitions held by literary clubs such the Arab Club (al-Muntada al-ʿArabī) founded by the Islamic scholar, the late Sheikh Ibrahim Kattan. In 1952, the first artistic group (Nadwat al-Fann al-Urdunnīya) was formed. Like similar societies elsewhere in the Arab world, its main purpose was to spread artistic appreciation among the public and to encourage amateur artists to practise painting and sculpture. Among the members who later took up art professionally were Rafik Lahham and Muhanna Durra.[353]

The government sent the first group of students on art scholarships to Europe in the late 1950s. Rafik Lahham, Muhanna Durra, Ahmad Nawash, and Kamal Boullata went to Italy, while Afaf Arafat was first sent to England

[353]Interview with Rafik Lahham, Amman, 6/3/1991.

and then to the United States for her master's degree. The number of cultural clubs and exhibitions gradually increased. Foreign cultural centres such as the British Council, the Goethe Institute and the French and American Cultural Centres were active in encouraging the arts, both in Amman and Jerusalem. They held exhibitions for local and visiting artists and sponsored lectures and musical events. These activities inspired both the artists and the public and helped expose one to the other.

Contemporary Artists.

By the early 1960s, those students who had studied abroad, either on their own or on scholarships, started to return. Each was a pioneer in his own right, establishing modern art in Jordan. Rafik Lahham (b.1932) graduated from ENALC (Ente Nationale Addestramento Lavoratori Commercio) and San Jacomo Institute in Rome (1962). He continued at the Rochester Institute of Technology in New York (1967) where he studied painting and etching and became the first Jordanian artist to work in printmaking.[354] He also was the first to organize his fellow artists in societies and associations and has always lived according to what he preached regarding the efficacy of group work. Lahham has moved between different styles choosing various subjects. He has painted classical portraits, figurative landscapes, stylized city scapes, abstract themes, compositions of Nabataean figures, arabesque motifs, and calligraphy, alternating his media between oils, gouaches, watercolours and etchings (fig. 80). He has lately been concentrating on calligraphic works, which include words imbued with spiritual and religious meaning, in one of the classical Arabic scripts, within compositions where colour and shape are the main elements. Lahham was

[354]Interview with Rafik Lahham, Amman, 6/3/1991.

the first Jordanian artist to use calligraphy in his work, though he did not pursue this approach. His calligraphic works remain rather sporadic and inconsistent.

The leading modern Jordanian painter in the 1960s was Muhanna Durra (b,1938). He graduated from the Academia di Belle Arte in Rome in 1958.[355] A gifted, prolific and temperamental artist, he established his own distinctive style at an early stage in his career. His highly expressive monochrome portraits and his fractured landscapes revealed his dexterity at manipulating colour, tonality and the distribution of masses (fig. 81). Durra opened a studio where he trained a number of young artists, and was the only local painter to cultivate his own students at the time. Even today touches of his style can still be detected in other artists' works. In 1971, he was appointed head of the Department of Arts and Culture, and in 1983, he became ambassador in the Arab League and was posted successively to Tunis, Rome, Egypt and Moscow.

Ahmad Nawash (b.1934) graduated from the Academia di Belle Arte in Rome (1964) and the École des Beaux Arts in Bordeaux where he studied graphics and etching. He later spent two years at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris (1975-77).[356] A leading modern artist, Nawash developed his individual style with disfigured, infantile shapes in dreamlike compositions that defy gravity and perspective (fig. 82). His subjects are mostly political and often depict the plight of Palestinians from a broad humanitarian perspective and through his own symbolic language.

A second group of artists returned to Amman in the mid-1960s after completing their art training. Mahmoud Taha (b.1942) is the leading

[355]Muhanna Durra file, Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.
[356]Ahmad Nawash file, Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.

Jordanian ceramicist and has trained with the well-known calligrapher Mustafa Hashim al-Baghdadi while studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad.[357] Taha introduced the art of ceramics into Jordan. His experimentations with coloured glazes have rendered interesting surfaces to his pieces in which he marries contemporary techniques and shapes with traditional calligraphic forms.

Aziz Amoura (b,1944) graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad in 1970 where he trained with Faiq Hassan. He went on a scholarship for his master's degree to the Pratt Institute in the United States, graduating in 1983.[358] A dedicated teacher, Amoura has trained many students of different age groups at his own studio and the Department of Fine Arts at Yarmouk University. During his early period he made impressionistic portraits and landscapes of the Jordanian countryside but gradually changed to political subjects in black and white pointillism. In his latest works, Amoura manipulates his strong academic training and incorporates calligraphy in neo-realistic compositions (fig. 83).

Yasser Duwaik (1940) is another graduate of the Fine Arts academy in Baghdad. He continued his studies at the Brighton College of Fine Arts in England before returning to take up a teaching post.[359] His early work consisted of landscapes (fig. 84) and portraits while his later phase is of expressionistic paintings and etchings that include calligraphic signs and have political connotations. Duwaik has recently moved to calligraphic abstractions in monotype, where the letters turn into enigmatic shapes within complex compositions.

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[357]Mahmoud Taha file, Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.
[358]Aziz Amoura file, Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.
[359]Yasser Duwaik file, Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.

Nasr Abdel Aziz (b.1942), Saleh Abu Shindi (b.1945), Tawfiq el-Sayed (b.1939), Mahmoud Sadeq (b.1945) and the sculptor Kuram Nimri are part of the same group as Taha, Amoura and Duwaik. Unlike their earlier peers, most of the young artists of the 1960s trained at Arab art colleges and academies in Baghdad, Cairo and Damascus. After obtaining their first degrees, they went to either Europe or the United States for their post-graduate studies. Upon their return to Jordan, they taught at the Institute of Fine Art, government secondary schools, or the Department of Fine Art which was later established at Yarmouk University. This group of artists sowed the seeds of modern art concepts among their students, nurturing a new generation of younger painters and sculptors. For more than two decades, the artists of the 1960s have been the main force on the art scene in Jordan, and constitute the foundation on which modern Jordanian art has been built.

Art Patronage and Activities.

During the 1960s, the government's contribution and patronage of the arts increased. The Ministry of Tourism started sending Jordanian works of art to international fairs and exhibitions, beginning with the New York Fair of 1965. Others in Damascus, Baghdad, Bari, Rome, Copenhagen and Berlin followed. In 1966, the Department of Culture and Arts was created within the Ministry of Youth, with the objective of supporting and fostering cultural activities in fine arts, theatre, and literature. In 1977, this Department became the Ministry of Culture.

In the 1960s, the main venues for local exhibitions in Amman and Jerusalem were mainly foreign cultural centres and big hotels. Exhibitions were held quite often and a segment of society started collecting works by

local artists. These new patrons were mainly young professionals - doctors, architects and engineers - who became conscious of the importance of art collections.

However, in June, 1967 the second Arab-Israeli war abruptly halted this period of thriving artistic activity. In five days, Israel occupied the Sinai and Jordan's West Bank, dividing both the land and its people. West Bank artists were cut off from Jordan, and some emigrated to Europe and the United States. The military defeat and political setback gave rise to a new trend in art and literature in the Arab world. It was a pessimistic trend that revealed the bitterness and disappointment of artists and intellectuals with their leadership. It also carried a nationalistic message opposing the Israeli occupation. It is hardly surprising that between 1967 and 1970, the pace of art development in Jordan slowed down considerably, given the harsh political and economic realities that the country faced in these years.

Artistic movements began to stir once again in the early 1970s. The appointment of Muhanna Durra as Director of the Department of Arts and Culture in 1971 benefitted the art world of Jordan. He founded the Institute of Fine Arts which included well-established artists among its teachers, including himself. They nurtured a number of second-generation artists, some of whom continued their studies in Europe and then returned to establish themselves. Their painting styles varied and they expressed themselves through individual approaches that ranged between Expressionism and Abstraction. Their training, whether in Western or Arab academies, directed them towards current international styles. Like their peers in other Arab countries, the depiction of local landscapes and folk motifs became the means by which they asserted a national artistic identity.

In 1975, Fahrelnissa Zeid (1901-1991), an artist of Turkish origin and a prominent figure in Turkish modern art, moved from Paris to Amman. She was married to the Hashemite Prince Zeid Al-Hussein, the youngest son of Sharif Hussein bin Ali of Mecca. She had trained at Istanbul's Academy of Fine Arts and the Académie Ranson in Paris. Zeid had spent most of her life between Berlin, London and Paris, accompanying her husband who was an ambassador of Iraq during the Hashemite monarchy. She was a seasoned and versatile artist and she started a studio in Amman, *the Art Institute of Fahrelnissa Zeid*, where she gave painting lessons to a group of society ladies. One of her students, Suha Shoman, distinguished herself and became established in her own right. Her students emulated her abstract style and Byzantinesque portraits (fig. 85). Fahrelnissa Zeid was a prolific artist who continued to paint until she died. She worked with oils, water-colours, stained glass, china inks, and transparent paleocrystals (a transparent resin developed by her student, the Iraqi artist Issam El-Said in London). She painted huge textured abstract canvases, giant expressive portraits and free-standing futuristic sculptures. After moving to Amman, she created interest in art among the privileged and introduced abstract painting to the public on a grand scale. As the great aunt of King Hussein, Zeid's one-person and group exhibitions (with her students) would be inaugurated by the king and queen and would receive full media coverage. Those who had never been to an exhibition went to see her shows and were exposed to her large abstract canvases and new media. Although other artists had painted abstract paintings since the 1960s, their work had never been exposed to the public in the same way.

One of the outstanding artists of the mid-1970s was Ali Jabri (b.1943). Jabri read history at Bristol University and fine arts and architecture at

Stanford University in California. Obsessed with the preservation of Arabic culture, he depicts in his neo-realist style, national events such as the Arab Revolt, historical monuments and archaeological sites of Jerash and Pella (fig. 86) as well as Jordanian landscapes and scenes of old Amman, Aqaba and Cairo. He has developed an interesting technique in mixed media, employing collage and super-imposed figures, meticulously paying attention to detail. He is sensitive to the encroachment of concrete buildings on the countryside, and has attracted the authorities' attention to the importance of preserving neglected old houses and converting them into functional buildings.

In 1979, the Royal Society of Fine Arts was established in Amman - a private, non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of visual arts in Jordan and the Islamic world. In 1980, the Society founded the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts, the first of its kind in the country. It is thus far the only art gallery in the world that collects works by Islamic and Third World artists. The permanent collection of the National Gallery comprises over 1500 works by established artists from more than 30 countries, extending from southeast Asia to Africa. The Gallery has a computerized information centre on Arab and Islamic artists, a reference library, and a conservation department. It obtains art scholarships for artists and holds workshops, and seminars on art and museum management. From its inception, the Gallery set high standards for Jordanian artists through its discriminating choice of exhibitions and works for the collection. It has held over 50 major exhibitions from Europe and the Middle East, displaying works by major contemporary artists, including Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Debré, Za Wou Ki, Vierra de Silva, Soullage, Mahmoud Mukhtar,

Faiq Hassan, Omar Onsi, and others. It was the first time that original works of art by established Western and Arab artists were exhibited in Jordan. The Gallery's regular cultural activities have unfurled new perspectives for local artists and the general public. It has also been instrumental in introducing Jordanian and modern Islamic art abroad, and organizing exhibitions from its permanent collection in Turkey, Poland, France, England, Italy, Egypt and Canada. It has taken exhibitions to other Jordanian cities and even to remote villages like Wadi Musa, where villagers and Bedouins were able to see Western-style paintings for the first time in their lives. In 1989, the Royal Society of Fine Arts, in cooperation with the Islamic Arts Foundation in London, organized the largest exhibition of contemporary Islamic art to be held in the West; *Contemporary Art from the Islamic World* was held at the Barbican Centre in London and included 254 works by 107 artists from 19 Islamic countries, from Brunei to Morocco. A volume was published to coincide with the exhibition which records the development of fine art in the countries represented. For some artists from Brunei, Libya and Yemen, it was the first time that any such reference had been written on modern art from their countries.

Art Education.

In 1952, the first art institute was founded in Jordan. Dr. Jean Kayaleh, an ophthalmologist, violinist, and art lover, opened the Institute of Music and Painting in central Amman. He brought the Italian artist Armando Bruno (1930-1963) to take charge of the institute. Bruno was the first Western art teacher in Jordan and instructed his students in the basics of anatomical drawing and perspective. A demanding pedagogue, he encouraged his students to paint from nature and produce portraits from life.

The institute became a meeting place for young artists and intellectuals and was the first endeavor to formalize art training in Jordan. However, Bruno emigrated to the United States in 1962 and the Institute closed down.

Basic art education in Jordan has been organized in the form of art lessons introduced in primary and secondary schools since the early 1960s. Because artists cannot viably make a living from selling their work, most are employed as art teachers in government and private schools. Since the Institute of Fine Arts opened in 1971, it has offered courses in painting, sculpture, ceramics and etching. Its program is that of a foundation course.

In 1980, a Fine Arts Department was established at Yarmouk University in Irbid. It is the first institute of higher education to offer a degree in Fine Art and includes well-established painters like Aziz Amourra and Ahmad Nawash among its faculty. Since the end of the Gulf war, a number of Iraqi artists have also joined the faculty. Since 1990, nine private universities have been established in Jordan. Most of them have a Department of Fine Arts which include local artists on their faculty.

The founding of both the Jordan National Gallery and the Fine Arts Department in 1980 is an important milestone in the development of modern art in Jordan. The Gallery gave the art movement a formal character through its continuous activities. It provided a regional centre of high standards for Arab and Islamic artists, where they could exhibit their works and conduct research. It simultaneously exposed Jordanian and contemporary Islamic art to the West. Through its fund-raising campaigns and programmes for school children, Jordan's general public got involved in art patronage for the first time, and it has become conscious of a Jordanian art movement.

By providing formal art training at the university level, the Department of Fine Arts at Yarmouk University has augmented the number

of art students and supplied the Ministry of Education and the commercial market with instructors and graphic artists. It also provided opportunities for established artists who have studied abroad to train talented students.

Art Societies.

In the 1950s and 1960s, a number of art societies and clubs appeared. They flourished for a few years, but then had to close down for lack of funds. In 1974, the Artists' Association was founded with the express aim of helping its members promote their work by arranging local exhibitions, participating in biennales and other exhibitions held in the Arab world. Almost all established artists in Jordan are members of the Association. However, because of financial weakness it has faltered and remained relatively ineffectual.

Much like their peers in the region, artists in Jordan have been concerned with discovering and establishing a Jordanian style and asserting their Arab cultural identity by depicting local subject matter, and drawing on folk motifs and Arabic calligraphy within an international framework.

Chapter 12.

Palestine.

As late as 1948, fine art in the Western sense of the word had not fully developed in Palestine. The traditional and folk arts and crafts predominated, and included embroidery, pottery making, weaving and straw work, calligraphy, icon painting, wood engraving, stone carving, mosaics and mother of pearl work. Ottoman mural painting and pictorial art in the style of the Turkish soldier-painters was unknown in Palestine.

In 1917, the country came under British rule. Unlike the French colonists, the British Mandate authorities did little to further the cultural development of the countries they controlled. They were primarily interested in training qualified civil servants to work in bureaucracy.[360] In Palestine, art education and art patronage were low on their list of priorities. Furthermore, the internal clashes between Arabs and Jews, coupled by uprisings and general strikes against the British, did little to encourage the authorities to send students on art scholarships or include art classes in school curricula.

Jamal Badran (b.1909) was the first Palestinian to study at the School of Arts and Decorations (Madrasat al-funūn wa'l-zakhārif) in Cairo (1927) where he specialized in painting, Islamic design and calligraphy. In 1934, he was sent on a three-year scholarship to the Central School of Art and Design in London where he trained in ceramics, metalwork, textile design and book binding.[361] In 1940, Jamal opened the Badran Studio and Workshop in

[360]S.Zaru, "Palestine", Contemporary Art from the Islamic World, p.236.
[361]I.Shammout, Al-fann al-tashkīlī fi filisṭīn, p.33.

Jerusalem with his two brothers Khairy and Abdul Razzaq. Thereafter, many traditional artists (such as Yusef Najjar and Muhammad Siam) were trained in calligraphy, arabesque design and applied arts at Badran's studio. In 1947, Amir Abdullah of Transjordan (later King Abdullah of Jordan) commissioned the Badran Studio to make a wedding gift for Princess Elizabeth (later Queen Elizabeth II). It was an olive wood chest with painted Islamic designs and silver inlay. In 1953, Badran temporarily moved to Damascus where he taught crafts at the Teachers Training College. He then spent ten years in Libya as a Unesco expert in crafts and art education. In 1962, he returned to Ramallah and opened an atelier where he worked with leather, wood and metal.[362] Despite Badran's skill in three-dimensional painting, his chosen practice was Arabic calligraphy and Islamic design, which he skillfully mastered (fig. 87). He could trace intricate patterns, interspersed by Kufic letters, without the aid of a ruler or compass. After it was destroyed by arson in 1968, he recreated the designs of the al-Aqsa Mosque during its renovation. Badran also made calligraphic paintings in the classical Arabic scripts and embellished them with traditional arabesque designs.

In the 1930s, approximately fifteen Palestinian students left to Cairo to study at the School of Decorative Arts (Madrasat al-funūn al-zukhrufīyah) and the School of Applied Arts (Madrasat al-funūn al-tadbīqīyah).[363] Because of the strong influence of Palestinian craft patterns, especially embroidery, young Palestinians were generally not keen on Western art. Most of those who studied applied and decorative arts became teachers of crafts, design, and art education in Palestine and other Arab states.

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[362]Interview with Jamal Badran, Amman, 7/4/92.
[363]Shammout, Op.cit., p.35.

The earliest known Palestinian painter of modern times was from Jerusalem's Sayegh family (c.1910). He ran a shop next to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre where he sold his own mostly religious oil paintings to Christian pilgrims as souvenirs. He occasionally painted landscapes and still-lifes and restored church icons and paintings. Another early artist was Tawfiq Jawhariya (c.1920), a prolific painter, who also made a living by selling his religious paintings to pilgrims and tourists.[364] Both artists had almost no impact on the early development of modern Palestinian art for they both painted to make a living and were uninterested in creating a local artistic movement. Sayegh and Jawhariya may have been influenced by the works of Orientalist artists who came to Palestine, but as no records exist, this issue remains speculative.

The first individual who can be regarded as a Palestinian modern artist was Hanna Musmar (1898-1988), the son of a simple construction worker who was put in a German boarding school after the death of his father, where he studied ceramics. He joined a fine art college in Germany in 1920 where he spent three years pursuing his chosen field. Upon his return, he founded the first ceramics factory in Nazareth where he manufactured hand-painted vases. After 1948, his work developed to include murals and sculptures in pottery and ceramics dealing with national events and tragedies.[365]

The first Palestinian to study painting in Europe was Faddoul Odeh (b.1906). He went to Florence on a scholarship secured by an Italian priest from the Convent of Nazareth in1922. The priest, who was an art teacher at

[364]Ibid, p.31.
[365]Ibid. p.31.

the convent's school, had noticed Odeh's early talent. Odeh taught music and painting upon his return, and chose Biblical themes and landscapes as his subjects. In 1948, he was among the refugees who went to Sidon in Lebanon where he continued to teach but never participated in any known exhibitions.[366]

Daoud Zalatimo (b.1906) is a self-taught artist who was introduced to oil painting during his visits to Sayegh's shop and through his friendship with Tawfiq Jawhariyah. He joined the few summer courses in painting and crafts organized by the Educational Administration in Jerusalem. Since 1925, he has taught painting and crafts in Khan Yunus then in Lydda, where he paid special attention to discovering new talent (among whom was Ismail Shammout who was to become the official painter of the PLO). Zalatimo painted huge canvases of historical events and personalities, such as the *Entry of ʿUmar bin al-Khaṭṭāb into Jerusalem*, *The Siege of Granada* and *King Faisal I.* He also depicted famous monuments and landscapes which he did in situ, using a simple naïve style that differed from that of the Orientalists (fig. 88).[367]

Fatima Muhib (b.1920) was the first woman from Palestine to study art. She graduated from the College of Fine Arts in Cairo in 1940 and obtained her MA in Fine Art from Hulwan University in 1942.[368] She is known for her portraits of Arab leaders and scenes of Jerusalem. Other early women artists were Sofie Halaby from Jerusalem and Lydia Atta from Bethlehem. The former studied art in Paris and excelled in soft watercolours of Palestinian landscapes and detailed wild flowers, while the latter painted

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[366]Ibid, pp.32-3.
[367]Ibid, p.39.
[368]Fatima Muhib file, Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.

scenes of churches and domes. However, Atta left few works behind when she emigrated to Australia in 1940.[369]

Most early Palestinian artists were untrained amateurs. Those who were trained, like Fatima Muhib, blindly imitated the styles they were taught. Early Palestinian painting was figurative, using oils, water-colours, and pastels to depict landscapes, still-lifes and portraits of historical and contemporary personalities and biblical themes. Not a single group or one-person exhibition was held in Palestine before 1948.

To cover the Palestinian modern art movement since 1948 and 1967 one has to deal with artists living in Israel and the Occupied Territories separately from those living in the diaspora. The matter is complicated by the fact that Palestinian artists were uprooted several times, first in 1948 and then in 1967. After Lebanon's civil war broke out in 1975 and the Israeli invasion of the country in 1982, many Palestinians living in Lebanon moved elsewhere.

Following the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, Palestinians, among whom were a number of artists, were dispersed throughout the other Arab states. Some took up the nationality of their adopted countries, and those involved in art were included in the art movements of their countries of residence. For example, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, from Bethlehem, a pioneer among Palestinian artists in Expressionism and Cubism, took up residence in Iraq in 1948. One of the best known Arab art critics and historians, he has been active in the modern art movement in Iraq. Juliana Seraphim from Jaffa and Paul Guiragossian from Jerusalem joined the Lebanese modern art movement. In contrast, artists like Ismail Shammout, Samia Zaru, Samira

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[369]Zaru, Op.cit., p.236.

Badran, and Kamal Boullata have kept their identity in the diaspora and have always been identified as Palestinians.

Modern Pioneer Artists.

The most prominent Palestinian artist is Ismail Shammout (b.1930). He showed early promise while still in school in Lydda where Daoud Zalatimo discovered his budding talent and introduced him to oil colours and perspective. His father who was a simple fruit and vegetable merchant, was not enthusiastic about his son's passion for art and discouraged him from pursuing it as a career. At the time, it was fashionable to paint baroque flowers and birds on wedding dresses and Shammout practiced this kind of painting, earning additional income for his family. This convinced his father that one could earn a living as an artist. Shammout also painted landscapes and portraits in a classical style. In 1948, he was among the refugees who reached Gaza where he lived in a refugee camp and worked as a street vendor. Eventually, he became a teacher in a school for refugees where art supplies were available to him. He chose subjects from his new environment, drawing and painting makeshift tents, and women and children waiting in long queues for food and water, all in a style similar to the figurative art which he had practiced in Lydda. He held his first exhibition in 1950, in the school where he taught and, in the same year, made his way to Cairo, worked as a commercial artist, and he became the first Palestinian to enroll at the College of Fine Arts. He trained under famous Egyptian artists such as Ahmad Sabri, Hussein Bikar and Husni Banani and came into contact with other pioneer artists like Raghib Ayyad, Gamal Saggini, Abdul Hadi Gazzar, and Youssef Kamel who was the Dean of the College of Fine Arts. During his three years of training, he painted Palestinian subjects in a

classical, realistic manner. He ignored new trends because he wanted to communicate with his public and make them understand the message in his work (fig. 89). In 1953, he was too intimidated to show his work in Cairo so he took his paintings to Gaza and held the first one-person exhibition in Palestine. Following his graduation in 1954, he arranged the first Palestinian group exhibition ever in the Egyptian capital.[370] It was entitled *The Palestinian Refugee* and was inaugurated by President Gamal Abdul Nassir. After the exhibition, Shammout left to Rome and received a scholarship from the Italian government to study at the Academia di Belle Arte. He went to Beirut in 1956, worked for two years with UNRWA, and opened a commercial advertisement office.[371] In 1976, Shammout's style changed as the emphasis on perspective waned in favor of simple forms and minimal details, concentrating more on the theme and the message in the work (fig. 90). The expressiveness in his paintings took over the composition and replaced his previous figurative realism.

Shammout was not only the first modern Palestinian artist to formally study art, but the first to establish a content-oriented movement which revolved around Palestinian subjects, the suffering of the people, and the loss of their motherland. Furthermore, he was the first to utilize those subjects in the service of his people's cause.

Tamam Akhal (b.1935) was among the refugees who fled to Lebanon after the 1948 war. She painted postcards in Beirut and sold them to increase her family's meagre income. The pioneer Lebanese artist Moustafa Faroukh noticed her work while visiting the Maqassid School where she was studying, and recommended that she continue her art training. Consequently, her

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[370]Shammout, Op.cit., pp.48-52.
[371]Ibid, pp.52-8.

father sent her to study at the Higher Institute for Women Art Teachers in Cairo in 1953. She thus became the first Palestinian woman artist to acquire formal art training after 1948. In 1954, she participated in the exhibition organized by Ismail Shammout and it was the beginning of an artistic collaboration which led to her marriage to Shammout. Akhal proceeded from style to style, from Realistic-expressionism through which she depicted the Palestinian tragedy to an individualistic, colourful style that depicted a cheerful nostalgia for her native land. Since the mid-1980s she has moved to a symbolic abstraction, using traditional Palestinian embroidery motifs and stylized Arab forms inspired by the 13th-century paintings of the Abbasid painter, al-Wasiti (fig. 91). Her compositions took up bright harmonious colours and simple lines while still treating painful Palestinian subjects.

In 1949, the Gaza Strip came under Egyptian sovereignty. The government began to provide Gaza with art teachers and supplies, thus invigorating art education and introducing art classes to talented youth.[372] In Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, Palestinian students followed the governments' curricula and became part of the art movement in each country. Between 1953 and 1965, about 100 young Palestinian men and women, almost half of them from Gaza, pursued art in different institutions in Cairo, Alexandria, Baghdad, Damascus, London, Rome, Paris, Leipzig, Dresden, Tokyo, Washington D.C. and Madrid.[373] Some were sent on scholarships by Arab governments and the others went on their own.

[372]Ibid, p.60.
[373]Ibid, p.62.

Palestinian Artists Under Occupation.

Little is known of Palestinian artists living in Israel between 1948 and 1955, probably because there was little artistic activity in that period. Among Palestinian artists living in Israel today are Asad Azi (b.1955), a painter and sculptor who graduated from the Academia di Belle Arte in Carrara, Italy and from the Tel Aviv University.[374] One of his modern sculptures was exhibited in the Haifa Museum. Daher Ziadani, another Palestinian artist, went to study art in Leipzig in 1968. After his return he lived and painted in Galilee for a few years before emigrating to Germany. Abd Abidi, also from Galilee, graduated at the end of the 1960s from the Arts Academy in Dresden where he specialized in woodcuts and etching. His black and white expressionistic prints distinctly show the influence of his German training. With the Israeli artist Kershon Kensbil, Abidi executed a monument in bas-relief that showed the Palestinians' attachment to the land. Other artists such as Khalil Rayan, Ibrahim Hijazi, Marwan Abul Haija, Suad Nasr and Bassam Hayek studied art in occupied Jerusalem, Haifa and abroad, although little is known of their activities.[375] Between 1967 and 1989, more than 150 one-person and group exhibitions by Palestinian artists were held in Israel and the occupied territories.[376]

Since 1967, the work produced under occupation reveals anger and resentment. Working under difficult and sometimes very disruptive conditions, artists have attempted to express their defiance in their art. Artists in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have resorted to non-violent, artistic

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[374]South of the World, p.251.
[375]Shammout, Op.cit., pp.70-2.
[376]Ibid, p.78.

expressions of nationalism in order to be able to display their paintings without offending, and incurring the wrath of the occupying authorities.

Isam Badr (b.1948) from Hebron, is a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad (1973) and Tbilsi Academy of Fine Arts in Georgia, within the former Soviet Union, where he obtained a degree in ceramics.[377] Doves, the walls of old Jerusalem, and geometric rug motifs are some of the symbols integrated in a stylized manner to confirm his identity.

Suleiman Mansour (b.1947) is an artist from Bir Zeit who has moved to total abstraction and new media after a period of symbolic figurative art and stylized realism. He currently uses straw, chalk, lime, clay, animal fat and natural dyes such as indigo, to construct his abstract and stylized works on wood (fig. 92). Although none of his works carries any trace of open resistance or politicization, by using materials from his own environment and boycotting Israeli art materials, Mansour makes a strong but subtle statement while avoiding Israeli harassment.

Tayseer Barakat (b.1959) is a Gazan graduate of the College of Fine Arts in Alexandria (1983).[378] His attachment to the land is reflected in the earth colours of his expressive, pastoral compositions that betray influences of the modern Egyptian school through his stylization of animal and human figures.

In 1964, the Palestinian Liberation Organization was created and Shammout was appointed Director of Arts at the PLO in Beirut, thereby giving Palestinian artists the official patronage they lacked. He has since organized numerous exhibitions in the Arab world and abroad and has been exploiting art as a political instrument to serve the Palestinian cause.

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[377]Isam Badr file, Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.
[378]Tayseer Barakat file, Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.

Art Groups.

In 1969, the Palestinian Artists Association was established in Amman; the following year it created chapters in occupied Jerusalem and Ramallah. It eventually moved to Beirut and then to Kuwait. The Association attempted to integrate the art movement into an organized body that would coordinate artistic activities and protect the rights of Palestinian artists in the diaspora. In 1972, the PAA held its first meeting in Jerusalem, home of its intended headquarters. Several exhibitions by members of the Association were held, including Nabil Anani, Suleiman Mansour, Isam Badr, Tayseer Sharaf and others. Because of the nationalistic subjects depicted, the Israeli authorities halted the activities of the PAA and eventually closed down its branches. They confiscated some of the works and prohibited all exhibitions by its members, some of whom were detained. They also banned artists from using the colours of the Palestinian flag (red, black, green and white) in their works. The Association nevertheless, continued to open branches in countries where a considerable number of Palestinian artists lived. It also cooperated with the Union of Arab Artists in organizing travelling exhibitions of Palestinian art. Meanwhile, the Palestinian theatre group, *al-Ḥakawātī*, which was founded by poets, artists, actors and playwrights living in Palestine prior to 1948, created an active cultural program that included plays, musical recitals, exhibits, lectures, discussions and shows of traditional costumes. It worked closely with the PAA, and after the latter was shut down, it began to organize art exhibitions and invited artists from abroad to display their work. *Al-Ḥakawātī* became popular among Arabs and Israelis alike in Palestine and went on tour to Europe and the United States. Upon their return to Palestine, the authorities

once again interfered and censored its plays and other activities on the grounds that they were a security threat. *Al-Ḥakawātī* remained entirely at the mercy of the authorities as to when and how to function.[379]

In 1980, the Military Governor of the West Bank ordered the closing down of the only art gallery in the occupied territories - *Gallery-79* of Ramallah. The Palestinian artist Fathi Ghabn was arrested in 1984 and sentenced to six months in prison because he had used the colours of the Palestinian flag in a painting. Liberal Israeli artists and intellectuals consequently issued a declaration denouncing the repressive measures of their government against Palestinian artists. In 1985, a joint Israeli-Palestinian exhibition entitled *Against Occupation and for Freedom of the Artist* was held in Tel Aviv. In 1988, three more artists, Adnan Zubaidi, Jawad Ibrahim and Khalid Hourani were arrested.[380] These difficult and even dangerous conditions for artists, continue up to the present.

Prison Art.

A phenomenon particular to Palestinian artists is prison art. Among the thousands who have been put behind bars by the occupying authorities, a few have taken up painting. Using white handkerchiefs and coloured crayons smuggled into prison, these prisoner-artists create emotionally-charged compositions that cannot be related to any particular known style. The works are at the same time realistic, symbolic, surrealist, expressionist and naïve, and are not larger than 30x30cm, the size of a handkerchief, the only material available for painting in prison (fig. 93). Among these prison artists are Mohammad Rakwi, Mohammad Abu Kirsh, Zuhdi al-Adawi and Mahmoud

[379]Zaru, Op.cit., pp.239-40.
[380]Shammout, Op.cit., pp.82-3.

Afana, all of whom are serving life sentences and live under great duress. Their materials are smuggled into prison and their work is likewise smuggled out. They use limited colours and depend on symbolism to express their anger and frustration. One of their main symbols is the Palestinian flag which has been included in most of the works. Palestinian prison artists constitute a closely-knit art group that employs the same subject matter and media.[381]

Palestinian Artists Living Abroad.

Many of the Palestinian artists dispersed throughout the world have been successful in building careers in art in the countries where they reside. Kamal Boullata (b. 1942) from Jerusalem, went on a scholarship from the Jordanian government to the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome and then continued his art training at the Corcoran Art Museum School in Washington, D.C. He emigrated to the United States after the 1967 war and taught a course - Modern Arab Culture - at Georgetown University.[382] Laila Shawa (b.1940) is a Gazan who graduated from the Leonardo da Vinci Institute of Fine Arts in Cairo and the Academia di Belle Arte in Rome, and worked with Oscar Kokoschka in his Salzburg studio. She lived between Gaza and Beirut for some time, but settled in London in 1979.[383] Samir Salameh (b.1944) from Safad, first trained in Damascus and was then at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris where he settled.[384] Vladimir Tamari (b.1942) from Jerusalem, studied art at the American University in Beirut and the

[381]Ibid, pp.84-6.
[382]Kamal Boullata file, Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.
[383]Laila Shawa file, Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.
[384]Samir Salameh file, Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.

Saint Martin School in London before moving to Tokyo in 1970.[385] Samira Badran (b.1954), the daughter of Jamal Badran, trained at the College of Fine Arts in Cairo and at the Academia di Belle Arte in Florence;[386] and she lives now in Barcelona.

Despite the potent influence of traditional Islamic and local craft in Palestine that was current through the 1950s (and the number of the early artists who utilized this influence), Western-style painting (and sculpture, although to a much lesser degree), has become the norm. The plight of the Palestinian people divided its artists into four groups: those living in Israel, those living under occupation, those residing in other Arab countries, and the group dispersed between Europe, the United States and the Far East. Whether directly or otherwise, they have all experienced the tensions and existential stress created by the political realities of their homeland. Therefore, they are all united by their subject matter which revolves around the political and social issues that are linked with the loss of their nationhood. Even those born outside Palestine and integrated into the art movements of their host countries have shown strong national bonds. They frequently visit their families in the Occupied Territories and Israel and create a content-oriented art that deals with the difficulties of their people. This kind of obsession with one's country is certainly unique in the history of Arab art and has affected other Arab as well as Israeli artists. Art for Palestinian artists has become a passionate and introspective means by which they safeguard their identity in a hostile environment and propagate their cause throughout the world.

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[385]Vladimir Tamari file, Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.
[386]Samira Badran file, Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.

Chapter 13.

Sudan.

Sudan became a political entity after the Turkish-Egyptian conquest of the region in 1821. It is a country with a Pharaonic, African, Coptic, and Islamic cultural background but modern art, specifically painting, is a recent phenomenon in Sudanese culture, only emerging in the 1940s. There were no major cities in Sudan until the country gained independence from the British in 1951. It was primarily a country of villages. The capital, Khartoum, was a British creation with a large foreign community, including British, Copts and Greeks. Nomadic crafts in leatherwork, metalwork, weaponry, weaving and jewelry were the most common forms of visual art for no high tradition of Islamic architecture or applied arts had ever existed in Sudan. Besides local handicrafts, poetry and music were the main forms of artistic expression, while calligraphy was practised because of its bond to the Qur'an, although it never reached the level of sophistication attained in other Islamic countries.

Folk Artists.

In the 1920s, poets dominated the Sudanese literary world. They were public orators and performers who delivered religious, historical, mystical and romantic messages, extolling past glories. In their poems, they portrayed a certain imagery that fused tradition with the force of drama. In the second half of the 1920s, untrained folk artists started to respond to this mental imagery. They painted naïve works of local girls and watermelons, using primary colours, while disregarding the laws of perspective and light and

shade. Working with ordinary house paints and enamels for metal surfaces, they painted on wooden planks and a native cotton fabric called dammuriya, which they stretched on wood frames. The best known folk artists were Giha, Ali Osman and Ahmad Salim. Osman worked at the Graphic Museum, which, in fact, was a health museum created by the British to educate the local population in disease prevention and sanitary health protection. The English supervisor at the museum provided Osman with imported oil paints, making him the most sophisticated painter among his peers. In a way, those early primitive artists introduced easel painting to Sudan. They were well-liked in Khartoum and used to show their work in popular coffee-houses and restaurants. Ahmad Salim exhibited his work at the Grand Hotel in Khartoum as late as 1965.[387]

Art Education.

In 1902, the British established Gordon Memorial College, a secondary school to train civil servants, teachers and judges. Handicraft classes were part of its curricula. By the end of the 1930s, drawing lessons in pencil as well as classes in Arabic and English calligraphy were introduced into primary schools and at Gordon Memorial College, which offered the highest level of education. The three late educators Abdl Qadir Taloudi (a painter and sculptor), al-Khair Hashim (a painter) and Abdul Aziz al-Atbani (a sculptor and designer) had graduated form Gordon Memorial College and continued their studies at the colleges of Fine Arts and Applied Arts in Cairo. They joined the faculty of Gordon Memorial College and were the ones to establish art education in Sudan in the 1930s. In the 1940s, craft lessons were included in the intermediate and secondary forms and advanced-level

[387]Interviews with Muhammad Abdulla, London, 26/5/1992.

classes. In 1946, the School of Art was founded in Omdurman for talented graduates of Gordon Memorial College and the Institute of Education (Bakht al-Rida). In 1947, the School of Art was moved to Khartoum to become part of the Gordon Memorial College. Its dean, the Anglo-Frenchman Jean-Pierre Greenlaw, was previously an inspector of art classes for the government and he was assisted by the British John Cotrell. In 1948, the pedagogue Shafik Shawki (b.1923), who had graduated from Goldsmith College in London, was appointed an assistant to Greenlaw. Thus, he became the first Sudanese to join the faculty of the School of Art and was the link between the local students and the foreign teachers. Shawki was a talented painter whose teaching career left him little time to practice his art. Most of Sudan's later artists were trained by him.[388]

When the Khartoum Technical Institute was founded in 1950, the School of Art was moved from Gordon Memorial College to become the Art Department at the Technical Institute. John Cotrell was the head of the Department that had sections for calligraphy, painting, drawing, pottery, printmaking and textile design. Art education, however, mainly focused on history of Western art. The Institute was initially conceived to train designers and artisans and to graduate qualified art teachers for the colonial administration; the Institute later became the Khartoum Polytechnic. In 1964, it became the College of Applied and Fine Arts and was affiliated to Sudan University.[389]

In 1945, the Department of Education (later Ministry of Education) sent the first group of art teachers abroad on scholarships. They were Shafik

[388]Interview with Osman Waqialla, London, 26/5/1992, personal correspondence with Waqialla, 24/10/1992.
[389]Interview with Osman Waqialla by telephone communication 28/7/1992.

Shawki, Jamal al-Din Mubarak, Abdul Razzaq Abdul Ghaffar, Ahmad Ali Hamad, Kamal Mubarak, and Kamal al-Jak and they all attended Goldsmith College at the University of London. The second group of scholarship art teachers went to Egypt and England in 1946. Abdul Razzaq Mitwalli and Idris al-Banna were first sent to the Institute of Art Education in Cairo then to Goldsmith College. Al-Banna, an accomplished artist, later became vice-president to the Presidency Council in the 1980s. Abdul Aziz Abu Affan, Ibrahim Daw al-Beit, and Bastawi Baghdadi enrolled in Goldsmith College, while Osman Waqialla attended Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts. Waqialla became Shawki's assistant at the School of Fine arts in 1949.[390]

Modern Art Trends.

Unlike artists in other Arab countries, the Sudanese search for a national artistic identity dominated the works of its early artists well before Western art styles became prevalent. Because of the absence of an early Western art tradition in Sudan and the strong pervading presence of indigenous handicrafts, local trends in art came naturally in Sudanese paintings of the 1940s and 1950s. Consequently, the artistic output of the first generation of modern artists was imbued with an indigenous character, while international styles in art only appeared in the works of later generations.

Osman Waqialla (b.1925), the foremost living Sudanese artist and the first to explore the visual and thematic qualities of Arabic calligraphy, Ibrahim al-Salahi (b.1930), one of the early Arab calligraphic artists, and Ahmad Shibrain (b.?) who drew on his Arab-African background, are the

[390]Interview with Osman Waqialla, London, 26/5/1992.

three most prominent artists to experiment with embuing modern Sudanese art with a local character.[391]

Bastawi Baghdadi (b.1927) is a prominent pioneer artist of the first generation. He studied design at the Gordon Memorial College in Khartoum graduating in 1946, then went on to Goldsmith College in London, graduating in 1949. Upon his return to Khartoum, he was appointed an instructor to train art teachers. After that, he continued his studies at the Pratt Institute in New York.[392] Baghdadi addressed the issue of artistic identity by depicting Sudanese scenery and characters in an accomplished stylized manner, using burlap collages with oils (fig. 94).

Artistic Groups.

Sudanese modern art developed at an accelerating pace between 1950 and 1960. Three main art movements appeared in the country. The most important was the Old Khartoum School which was formed by a group of painters and sculptors who embarked on discovering a Sudanese identity through their work. The members amalgamated African and Islamic artistic traditions and modern techniques to come up with an indigenous Sudanese artistic personality.[393]

In contrast, the New Khartoum School, the second art group to form itself in Sudan, borrowed less from the country's past cultural heritage and claimed to be more Western oriented in media and techniques. Yet in reality, the Old and New Khartoum Schools are rather similar, except that the Old School had more depth and spontaneity in its works. Artists of the New

[391]The three artists will be discussed in chapter 16.
[392]Bastawi Baghdadi file, the Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.
[393]The Old Khartoum School is discussed in chapter 15.

School use Sudanese imagery combined with local materials such as basketwork and collage. The New Khartoum School has been criticized for accommodating its style to appeal to tourists and its critics claim that artists who joined after 1970 made conventional works to cater to foreign taste, neglecting the original aim of restoring their cultural heritage in the process.

The third Sudanese group was called the Crystalists. It was the only group to publish a manifesto,[394] and it was the closest movement to Western art styles, shunning influences from Sudan's cultural past. One of its main figures, Kamala Ibrahim Isahag (b.?), was also a member of the Old Khartoum School. Kamala Ibrahim graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Khartoum and the Royal College of Art in London.[395] After joining the Crystalists, her work began to take a more international aspect and her distorted subjects, reminiscent of Francis Bacon's figures, increasingly revolved around feminist problems in her country (fig. 95).

Several other Sudanese artists were not affiliated with any of the above-mentioned groups. However, they all included calligraphy and African patterns in their compositions. One such artist, Ibrahim el-Awaam (b.1935) first went to the American University of Cairo and then to the School of Fine and Applied Arts in Khartoum.[396] As a calligraphic artist he succeeded in creating his own style by mixing African decorative forms and Arabic calligraphy in colourful combinations (fig. 96). Majdoub Rabah (b.1933) graduated from the College of Fine Arts in Sudan before going to the Central School of Art in London (1958). He subsequently travelled to

[394]Rashid Diab told me of the manifesto during an interview in Amman, 12/11/1992. However, I could not obtain a copy of the manifesto neither in Khartoum nor abroad.
[395]Kamala Ibrahim file, the Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.
[396]Ibrahim el-Awaam file, the Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.

Japan where he studied new techniques in decorative design and printing.[397] He worked on natural wood with a variety of techniques - burning, drawing and carving - to execute his calligraphic compositions, interspersed by local signs and motifs. Ahmad Ibrahim Abdal Aal (b.1949) is a writer, painter and sculptor who graduated from the College of Applied and Fine Arts in Khartoum before continuing his training at the Université du Bordeaux in France.[398] He takes his subjects and media from his immediate environment and creates abstract paintings and sculptures impregnated with indigenous symbols yet rendered in a modern interpretation (fig. 97).

Art Materials.

Most Sudanese artists make use of local materials such as wood, burlap, inks and natural dyes while employing local techniques in their art work. This phenomenon results in the distinctive indigenous character of Sudanese modern art. During a two-week visit to Sudan in February, 1988, I saw how difficult Western art materials were to obtain. Whenever they were available, their prices were prohibitive for artists because they were imported and paid for in hard currency. In the College of Fine Arts at Khartoum University, Majdoub Rabbah, who was then the Dean, said that the College was unable to provide even coloured pencils for the students, let alone oils, canvas and water-colours. Very few artists could afford to import their art materials from Egypt. During my visits to artists' homes I was shocked by the conditions in which most of them lived. A typical normal situation would be a family of six or more children, a meagre income from a civil service job, and absence of any kind of official patronage. Because of the deteriorating

[397]Majdoub Rabah file, the Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.
[398]Ahmad Ibrahim Abdul Aal file, the Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.

economic and political situation due to the civil war in the south, military rule and repeated coup-d'états, Sudan is probably one of the few Islamic and Arab countries where government patronage of the arts is almost entirely absent and artists are left to fend for themselves. Furthermore, in the few cases where government positions exist, party politics and political affiliations determine the appointment of artists. There have been restrictions on freedom of expression recently and the so-called orthodox Islamic trend has been imposed on the country which has badly affected its artists.

Many established artists have left Sudan, draining its talent. Mohamed Omer Khalil lives in New York; Ibrahim al-Salahi moved to Dubai; Osman Waqialla, Muhammad Ahmed Abdulla, Muhammad Hassan Abdul Rahim and Siddiq al-Tejouni reside in England, and Rashid Diab has settled in Madrid. Those who have remained in the country work under impossible social and economic conditions. Nevertheless, Sudan has produced a considerable number of accomplished artists whose works testify to their talent, diligence, commitment and innovation.

Chapter 14.

The Arabian Peninsula.

A Historical Background.

Throughout history, most parts of the Arabian Peninsula have been isolated from the rest of the Islamic world. However, trade since before the advent of Islam, connected the ports of the southern and south-eastern coasts, as well as Mecca and the northern cities bordering Byzantium with Africa, the Indian-Subcontinent, Persia and Mediterranean countries. As trade routes changed, the commercial ties between Arabia and the rest of the world weakened. Only the Hijaz, where Mecca and Medina have enjoyed special religious status since the rise of Islam, maintaining ties with the rest of the Muslim world. When the great Muslim empires rose and fell, their cultural achievements hardly affected the peninsula. Nevertheless, Ottoman influence was reflected in the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina and the Haram Mosque at Mecca, whose religious significance motivated the Ottoman government to restore and enlarge them.

Like the rest of the Arab world, Najd, Hijaz and Yemen came under Ottoman rule in the 16th century, but if Iraq and Jordan were backwaters of the Ottoman Empire, the newly annexed areas of Arabia were even further removed. The 18th century saw the rise in Central Arabia of the Wahabis, the founders of a new sect of zealous Muslims who wanted to purge Islam and restore it to its alleged primitive strictness. The movement declined in the late 19th century until it was rekindled in 1902 by ʿAbdulʿazīz bin ʿAbd al-Raḥman Al Saʿūd (Ibn Saʿūd), the founder of the Saʿūdī Wahabi dynasty. During the first quarter of the 20th century, Ibn Sa'ud, with the help of the

British, was able to carve for himself a kingdom that extended from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea at the expense of the Ibn Rashid family in Ha'il (1921) and the Hashemite family in Hijaz (1924). He declared himself sultan in 1926 and, with the blessings of Great Britain, founded the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which comprised Najd and Hijaz in 1932. In 1933, the Arabian American Oil Company received its first concession in Saudi Arabia, providing a source of income to the Saudi government and people[399] such as they had never dreamed of in their previous spartan nomadic lives.

Oman and the eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, came under Portuguese rule in the 16th century. In the 19th century, the coastal area of south and east Arabia passed under British influence. It was politically divided into the Aden Colony, the Aden Protectorate, the Sultanate of Masqat and Oman, while the Gulf coast was ruled by and the Trucial Oman States, the Sheykhdoms of Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait, all of which depended, in varying degrees, on Great Britain and were under her protection through bilateral treaties. Yemen continued to be ruled by the Zaydi Imams who had been in power since 1592[400] under the nominal suzerainty of Istanbul. The Aden protectorate became the independent Republic of South Yemen in 1967. In 1968, the British announced their intention to withdraw their military forces from the Persian Gulf within three years,[401] which culminated in the creation of the states of the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman. Kuwait had already gained independence in 1961. The Arabian Gulf Cooperation Council was established in 1981 as an economic and political

[399]P. Hitti,History of the Arabs, p.741.
[400]J. Bacharach, A Near East Studies Handbook 570-1974, p.23.
[401]Hitti, Op.cit., pp.739-41.

union between the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, Qatar and Kuwait. The Council consisted of oil producing states which broadly shared a similar historical, cultural and political background.

At the start of the present century, Arabia had remained in a geographically isolated position, far from any outside cultural influences, apart from Hijaz and its sacred association with Islam. The people in the peninsula gratified their need for artistic expression through crafts, the most common of which were weaving, embroidery, silver and gold jewelry-making, woodcarving and naïve two-dimensional, decorative paintings on boats, walls and doors of houses and mosques. Craftsmen found the inspiration for their designs, choice of colour, and subject matter in their environment. This type of self-contained inspiration borrowed little from outside. On the coasts, foreign influence came mainly from the East, the Indian Subcontinent and its islands, and was evident in the imports of glass and pottery. However, local crafts declined once oil was discovered and as the interests of the Western powers in the Arabian Peninsula rose and the car and cement became central to the lives of the people.

Introduction of Western Art Concepts.

Three factors were instrumental in introducing Western art into the Arabian Peninsula:

1. The Educational system: Western art concepts first penetrated Arabia in the 1950s through the modern educational system. Although the earliest modern schools were sporadically founded as early as 1912 in Kuwait, 1919 in Bahrain, 1925 in Saudi Arabia, 1926 in Oman, 1951 in

Qatar, and 1953 in Sharjah,[402] until the 1930s and 1940s, the most common form of education in Arabia, was the traditional kuttab. A group of young children would assemble around a tutor, in his house or in the mosque, to memorize the Qur'an and learn discipline and good manners. However, a modern educational system gradually replaced the traditional one, and by the 1950s, schools teaching a variety of subjects became the norm. These modern schools also assumed additional roles. They became community centres for social and cultural activities, and public gatherings, sporting events, plays and exhibitions were held in them. For example, in Kuwait, school buildings served as sūq and places to sell foodstuffs, books and other commodities as well as provide a venue for wedding celebrations. These various social activities subsequently fostered an interaction between the local community and the school that catered to the needs of the people. For children, the school replaced the village square where they used to play most of the time.[403] The classroom became the arena for their artistic activities where they found guidance in drawing lessons according to the respective country's Department of Education programmes. The Departments of Education in Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf countries introduced drawing lessons into their curricula, followed by painting, both taught according to the competence of the art teachers employed.

The first country to include art education in its curriculum was Kuwait in the 1940s. These classes were rudimentary, taught by local instructors who had had no art training whatsoever. Successful implementation of a modern educational system required qualified instructors and teachers were

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[402]A. Salman, Al-tashkīl al-muʿaṣir fi duwal majlis al-taʿāwūn al-khalijī, p.24.

[403]A. Taqi,"The Contemporary School and Development of Fine Arts in Kuwait", Contemporary Art in Kuwait, (unpaginated) 20th from title page.

imported from Iraq, Egypt, and Palestine. Art instructors were among them although none was an established painter. Those who came to teach in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf were attracted by the material benefits offered to them, and they became instrumental in moulding the talent of the first generation of artists in the 1950s. The works of those locally-trained artists consisted of portraits and landscapes done in a primitive style that loosely followed basic academic principles of three dimensional drawing and easel painting. Some artists copied well-known works by European Renaissance painters. Only one teacher in Kuwait was known to rely on materials found in his own environment, such as clay and coconut fibre.[404]

2. Scholarships: Scholarships from governments constitute the second element that helped introduce Western art trends into the region, as educational authorities in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf started sending students abroad to study art. The first art scholarship recipient from the Peninsula was the Kuwaiti Mojab Dossari (1921-1956). In 1945, he attended the Institute of Decorative Arts in Cairo and, after graduation, was sent to London for a year to acquaint himself with Western art by visiting museums.[405] The Bahraini, Ahmad Qassim Sinni (b.1933) followed Dossari with a scholarship to England in 1952. The Saudi government sent Abdel Halim Radwi to Italy in 1961, while Jassim Zaini, the first Qatari to study abroad, went to Baghdad in 1965. From the United Arab Emirates, Mohammad Youssef, Hamad Sweidi, Mohammad Idrous, Ubeid Srour and Ibrahim Moustafa were sent to Cairo, Baghdad and Damascus in the mid-1960s.[406] The number of students of art training outside the peninsula has

[404]Ibid, 20th from title page.
[405]Ibid, 20th from title page.
[406]Salman, Op.cit., pp.24-5.

steadily increased. When these artists returned home, they transferred what they had seen and learnt abroad into their countries' evolving artistic movements.

2. Art societies: The formation of art societies in Arabia has played a significant role in the development of its modern art movement. The earliest were the Kuwaiti Society of Fine Arts and the House of Saudi Arts (1967), followed by the Modern Art Society in Bahrain (1969), the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts (1973), the Kuwaiti National Council for Culture (1973), the Emirates Society for Fine Arts (1980), and the Qatari Society for Fine Arts (1980). All these societies, whether publicly or privately founded, received official subsidies and were instrumental in furthering the arts. They arranged exhibitions at home and abroad, established contacts with other Arab and international artistic institutions, started collections of works by local artists, awarded prizes in the fine arts to local and Arab artists, and spread artistic awareness among the public. Members of artistic groups were not bound by a certain style or school. In their own way, these societies assumed the role which resembled that of artists' associations and unions in other countries.[407] They were a mixture between art fraternity, art institute, artists' union, and a government cultural department.

Kuwait.

Beginning in 1936, Kuwait was the first country in the region to implement a modern school system, and the first to grant scholarships in the arts (which makes its modern art movement the oldest among those in the Peninsula). The Kuwaiti government has taken major steps in promoting

[407]Ibid, p.25.

education and culture, through various measures and institutions. For example, even before its independence (in 1961), Kuwait hosted the 4th Arab Literary Conference in 1958, thereby setting a precedent among other Gulf states. On that occasion, the first major group exhibition was held with the participation of Kuwaiti and resident Arab artists.[408]

A new phenomenon to appear in the Arab world in 1960 was the creation of the Free Atelier for Fine Arts in Kuwait. It was the brainchild of Hamid Hamida (probably Egyptian), an inspector of art education, who proposed the establishment of a centre for amateur artists under the supervision of the Department of Education (later to become the Ministry of Education). The centre provided art classes for national and foreign resident art students and furnished the necessary studios and art materials. Artists and amateurs could join classes in painting, sculpture and printmaking in a free and unrestricted atmosphere. The Department opened the Free Atelier as a nucleus for an arts college. In its early stages, the Free Atelier only accepted male students. Daytime and evening classes were taught which enabled amateurs, students and practising artists to attend. The Atelier immediately bbecame a great success, despite the fact that it did not offer any certificate.[409] In 1972, the Atelier became the responsibility of the Ministry of Information which was transformed into the governing authority for all artistic and cultural affairs in Kuwait. The Atelier was transferred to a new location in a traditional Kuwaiti house, owned by Jabr Jassim al-Ghanim, which consisted of two exhibition halls, a library, several studios and workshops for painting, print-making, facilities for bronze casting, and a kiln for ceramics. A

[408]Salman, Op.cit., pp.98-9.

[409]Al-marsam al-hur, p.11. Not offering a certificate makes the Free Atelier an unofficial institute and does not qualify its graduates to be accepted in the civil service on the basis of their training.

diploma was granted to three-year participants and a higher one to five-year participants. At this point, it became a publicly-supported studio, strictly for the benefit of Kuwaiti artists, explicitly excluding residents of other nationalities and amateurs. The first instructors at the Free Atelier were art teachers from the Department of Education, working overtime. Established Kuwaiti artists later took over all teaching responsibilities.[410]

The great success of the Free Atelier surpassed the expectations of its founders and sponsors. It provided Kuwaiti artists with an opportunity to train in art and exhibit their work. Following in the footsteps of Kuwait, Qatar opened a Free Atelier in Doha in 1980, and in the same year, Oman started the Atelier of Plastic Arts in Muscat.

A second phenomenon witnessed in Kuwait in 1961 was the state support of full-time artists in the form of a monthly salary given for two or more years, which enabled them to fully dedicate themselves to their creative pursuits. Issa Saqr (the first artist to benefit), Khalifa Kattan, Badr Qattami and Abdallah Kassar all received full government stipends, and Qatar followed suit.[411]

Until the Iraqi invasion in 1990, Kuwait had greatly developed in the field of culture and the arts. In 1983, the Kuwait National Museum was opened with a splendid ceremony and a guest list that included most of the internationally-established authorities and collectors in the field of Islamic art. The greater part of the museum housed the comprehensive private collection of Nasser and Hussa al-Sabah, and a much smaller part displayed works of contemporary Kuwaiti painters and sculptors.

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[410] Al-marsam al-ḥur, pp.12-6.
[411] Interview with Abdul Rasul Salman, Amman, 4/4/1989.

Kuwaiti artists were considered pioneers among their peers in the peninsula. The first artist to set a trend of painting only local subjects was Mojab Dossari (fig. 98). Among other pioneer artists were Mohammad Damkhi (1943-1967), Ayoub Hussein (b.1932), Khalifa Kattan (b.1934), Mahmoud Al-Radhwan (b.1939) and Badr Qattami (b.1942). Most Kuwaiti art is figurative, depicting local landscapes and still-lifes. Surrealism also claims a strong following; its leading exponents are Yousuf Al-Qattami, Hameed Khazaal (b.1951), Khazaal Al-Qaffas (b.1944), Sami Mohammed (b.1943), and Sabiha Bishara (b.1949) (figs. 99, 100).

One of Kuwait's pioneer artists is Abdul Rasul Salman (b.1946). A graduate of the Teachers Training Institute who trained as a calligrapher, using a stylized type of script, in rich colours as the basic form for his compositions. His style vacillates between Surrealism, romantic realism, and calligraphic works (fig. 130).

The only Kuwaiti artist to have established himself abroad is Basil Alkazi (b.1938). He studied drama and art, the latter at the Central School of Art in London, after which he travelled extensively throughout Europe. He spent a year as an English teacher in Crete and now lives between London, California and Kuwait.[412] In a highly expressive style, Alkazi paints lyrical dream-like compositions which show his skill in design and the use of colour.

Saudi Arabia.

Until the late 1950s and early 1960s, there were no trained modern artists in Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, after Kuwait, Saudi Arabia was one of the first countries in the region to understand the importance of art education. The Institute of Art Education was founded in 1965, followed by the

[412]Basil Alkazi file, Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.

Colleges of Art Education at Umm al-Qura University in Mecca and Abdulaziz University in Jeddah. The General Directorate of Youth (1973), headed by King Fahad's son Faisal, within whose responsibility fall all cultural and artistic activities, sponsors all artistic societies. Some examples are the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts (1973) which has branches in Jeddah, Dammam and al-Ahsa', holding its first exhibition in 1975, and the House of Saudi Arts (1980) (Dār al-funūn al-saʿudīya) which, for the first time in 1981 invited other resident Arab and foreign artists to participate in an exhibition.[413]

Art Styles.

Aside from depicting the king's and royal family's portraits, Saudi nationalism in art expresses itself in narrative and genre paintings that portray the transition from a traditional to a modern lifestyle. Among the artists who express this transition are Safeya Binzagr in her primitive style (fig. 101), Abdullah Al Sheikh and Abdulaziz Al Khbairi.

The first of the early Saudi artists to be sent abroad was Abdul Halim Radwi (b.1939). He trained at the Academia de Belle Arte in Rome and later obtained his Ph.D from Spain. A painter and sculptor, he stresses the importance of drawing from one's own cultural heritage in a modern rendition (fig. 102). Radwi is currently the head of the Jeddah branch of the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and the Arts. Another early pioneer painter was Mohammed Mossa Al-Saleem (b.1939) who began painting and teaching art in the late 1950s without any formal art training. Aside from a

[413]Salman, Op.cit., pp.67-9.

few fragmented calligraphic paintings, his work mainly depicts desert landscapes.[414]

Abdel Aziz Ashour (b.1962) is a young artist and a trained calligrapher. In his calligraphic paintings, he mixes geometric and floral arabesque motifs, Islamic architectural shapes of domes and arches, with Arabic letters, sentences and words, in two dimensional decorative compositions (fig. 103). This mixture tends to weaken the constructional aspect of the work, lending it a certain superficiality, which is a handicap found in the works of many Arabian calligraphic artists.

Mona Qasbi (b.1959) is also a calligraphic artist. She studied at the College of Arts in the King Abdul Aziz University, and paints on glass. In her mixed media works, she uses quotations from the Qur'an along with traditional forms, to build up religious and folkloric compositions such as the K'aba door.

The most prominent Saudi painter is Faisal Samra (b.1955), a graduate of the École Nationale des Beaux Arts in Paris. Samra has discarded the academic approach and cast off his draughtsman's ingenuity for a highly expressionistic individual style executed in oil on wood or unframed canvas with thread and bamboo sticks. His works give expression to a state of 'mental movement' derived from his nomadic background, yet without any ethnic nostalgia.[415] After moving to Paris, Samra was able to break away from repetitive folk culture, and freed himself of conventional forms such as the human body, and dealt instead with the primitive and primary shape of the figure (fig. 104). He is the only Saudi artist who achieved artistic self-

[414]J. Grant, "Saudi Art: A Fledgling About To Take off", AIW vol.4 no.1 (1986), pp.28-31.
[415]I. Bongard, "Profile: Faisal Samra", AIW vol.5 no.2 (1990), pp.53-6.

realization through his highly expressive and individual style that avoids traditional motifs and clichés.

Qatar.

Qatar is a small country of less than half a million inhabitants which became independent in 1971. During the last ten years, the contemporary art movement in Qatar has been stimulated thanks to trained artists returning from Egypt, Iraq, France, Italy and the United States. Qatari artists are all relatively young. The two pioneers, Jassem Zeini (b.1943), a graduate of Baghdad Academy of Fine Arts in 1968 and a founder of the Free Atelier, and Sultan Alsileity (b.1945), were born in the 1940s. All other Qatari artists were born in the 1950s. Like their counterparts in neighbouring countries, most Qatari painters have depicted local scenes and customs (figs. 105). A few have adopted a form of Surrealism, while two abstract painters, Ali Hassan Algabir and Yusuf Ahmad, employ calligraphy in their compositions. Algabir (b.1957) uses both Nastʿalīq and a free hand script in his compositions of Arabic letters, while playing with the distribution of colour and light (fig. 106). Yussef Ahmad (b.1955) first got his B.A from Hulwan University, before going to University of Oakland City in California, where he got his Masters in Fine Arts.[416] After numerous experiments with various calligraphic compositions, scripts and renditions, Ahmad has attained a distinctive style whereby he transforms his letters into pure abstract signs. On raw canvas, he arranges them into rhythmic monochrome spaces of varying densities. Even when he employs legible sentences, he concentrates on strengthening the construction of his compositions rather than legibility and content (fig. 107). His works display careful structuring of the

[416]M. El-Bassiouny, "Contemporary Art in Qatar", AIW vol.3, no.4 (1985, 1986), pp.33-6, 126-7.

composition, mixed with spontaneous application, whose stature depends on his understanding of a proper utilization of aesthetic and compositional values. Apart from Ahmad, no other artist in the peninsula has yet developed an original and innovative style of calligraphic painting.

Bahrain.

Although Bahrain only became independent in 1971, the very early sparks of its modern art movement were kindled around 1952 with the departure of Ahmad Sunni on a scholarship to England, and the formation of the Arts and Literature Club (Nadwat al-fann wa'l-adab). The Club preceded other artistic societies which encouraged amateur painters, actors and musicians. In 1956, the first group exhibition in Manama displayed works by amateurs.[417] The modern art movement arose very recently when the Bahrain Art Society was founded in 1983. Besides sponsoring exhibitions inside and outside the island-state, the Society has been offering courses in painting, interior design, pottery, sculpture, Arabic calligraphy and photography. It is also concerned with artists' welfare and bridging the gap between them and the community through publications, public relations, and other means of communication. Among the older Bahraini artists are Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad Al Khalifa, Ahmad Qassim Sinni (b.1933), Abdul Karim Orayid (b.1936), Rashid Oraifi (b.1949), Nasser Youssef (b.1940), Rashid Swar (b.1940) and Abdullah Al-Muharraqi (b.1939) (fig. 108). In general, most of them conform to a realistic style, depicting local scenes and portraits as a means of cultural identification. The majority of Bahraini artists were trained either in Cairo or Baghdad. As a result, their work reveals the influence of Egyptian and Iraqi artistic trends (fig. 109). In their illustrative,

[417]Salman, Op.cit., pp.49-50.

realistic style, most of these artists refrain from using expressionist and surrealist trends. As for representatives of calligraphic art, there is Badie Al-Sheikh (1955) and Abdul Elah Al-Arab (b.1954). The former employs Arabic characters within an abstract composition similar to the works of Iraqi artist Dia Azzawi, while the latter, himself a calligrapher, uses a legible geometric Kufic, very similar to the style of the Palestinian artist Kamal Boullata.

United Arab Emirates.

The United Arab Emirates is a union of several sheikhdoms including Sharjah, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Ajman which all became independent in 1971. Sharjah, is the home of the Emirates Fine Arts Association.

The art movement in the Emirates dates to the mid-1970s, when artists sent on scholarships returned from Egypt, Iraq, Syria, England, France and the United States. Most artists obtained either teaching positions or employment in the Ministry of Education and other government bodies concerned with culture and youth. The Emirates Fine Arts Association which has been instrumental in arranging exhibitions in the UAE and other Gulf and Arab countries as well as France, Japan and India, includes all practicing artists who also participate in its management. As in neighbouring countries, the strongest artistic trend in the Emirates is a figurative one that records traditional scenes. Among its adherents are Abdul Qadir al-Rayis (b.1948), Muhammad al-Qasab, Ibrahim Mustafa, Abdar Rahman al Zainal, Muhammad Mundi, Issam Shreida (b.1953), Abd al Karim Sukar, Obaid Srour, and Muna al Khaja. The surrealists include Salih al Ustadh (b.1957) who has studied in California and produces Daliesque works, and Hisham al-

Mazloum, a graduate of the Al-'Ain University. Husain Sharif and Thoraya Amin are two young artists whose work is expressionistic and abstract. One of the most prominent artists in the Emirates is Muhammad Yousif (b.1954) who studied in Cairo (fig. 110). He is the director of the Fine Arts Association and also manages the Sharjah theatre. Yousif is a versatile artist who paints, sculpts, works in clay, and acts. After studying in London, Hassan Sharif (b.1956) embarked on an experiment dealing with the relationship between pictures and words. He tried to represent what he calls visual poetry, however, this experiment needs time to develop into a distinctive style. All the pioneer artists in the UAE were born in the early 1950s,[418] which reflects the youth of its modern art movement in the country.

Yemen.

Despite Yemen's ancient and rich cultural heritage, the dawn of a modern art movement only began in the mid-1970s. A few amateur painters without any formal training, used to organize occasional group exhibitions. After realizing the need for trained artists, the state sent students on scholarships. In the 1980s, these students returned and the number of professional artists increased with one-person shows taking place and annual group exhibitions.

Because the former Democratic Republic of South Yemen embraced socialism at its independence in 1967, the government imposed restrictions on the few existing artists. It urged them to depict nationalistic subjects pertaining to social and political issues in accordance with its political

[418]S. Kay, "Fine Arts in the UAE", AIW vol.3 no.4 (1986), pp.78-80.

agenda. The major exponent of this kind of revolutionary art was Ali Awwad Ghaddaf.[419]

The most prominent Yemeni artist is Fuad al-Futaih (b.1948) who trained in the Federal Republic of Germany (fig. 111). He opened the first exhibition hall in North Yemen in 1986 in an endeavor to form the nucleus of an art centre. In 1987, the Yemeni Artists' Society was established to help artists exhibit their works and raise the public's interest in art. Despite the recent discovery of oil, Yemen is not a rich country. Its government's patronage of culture and the arts is therefore not on a par with that of oil-producing countries like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. However, a Department of Plastic Arts within the Ministry of Information is concerned with artistic affairs. No formal art lessons are taught in the schools, although the number of scholarships to other Arab countries, as well as to Eastern and Western Europe is on the increase. Al-Futaih has recently been commissioned to execute the first public sculpture in Yemen, indicating a rising level of public awareness of the arts and public patronage.

Women Artists in the Arabian Peninsula.

In spite of the social restrictions imposed on women in Arabia, a considerable number, mainly painters, have established themselves as artists. Among them are Soraya al-Baqsami, Sabiha Bishara (fig. 112) and Nesrin Abdullah from Kuwait; Mounira Mosly, Safeya Benzagr, Salma Al-Kuthiri and Badria Al-Jassim from Saudi Arabia; Najat Hassan, and Amina Seif Majid from UAE; Safiya Swar, Haya Al Khalifa and Samiha Rajab from Bahrain; and Maryam Abdul Karim and Rabiha Bint Mahmoud from Oman. In Saudi Arabia, where women are still veiled in public and where strict

[419]Bahnassi, Ruwwād al-fann al-ḥadīth fī'l-bilād al-ʿarabīyah, p.170.

social codes enforce segregation between the sexes, artists hold two exhibition openings: the first official one for men and the second for women. Nevertheless, some women painters participate in mixed exhibitions even though they cannot attend their own openings.

Foreign Artists.

The economic boom that followed the oil price rise of 1971 brought a considerable number of foreign companies to Arabia. Among their personnel and dependents were some amateur artists and art lovers who tried to encourage the arts. One such attempt was the creation of the Dubai Art Society in 1976 by Caroline Jackson and the artist Mary José. The Society held a few exhibitions for local artists but, most importantly it invited foreign artists to exhibit in Dubai.[420] Simultaneously, al-Mathaf Gallery in London, which specializes in Orientalist works, began sending artists to the Gulf countries to paint portraits of royalty, local scenes of horses, falconry, sūqs, and the fast vanishing nomadic customs of desert life. Most of those artists were primarily illustrators. They depicted subjects geared for their main customers - the local upper class - in a highly representational style (fig. 113). Despite the high prices that their works fetch, none of the visiting painters have any influence on local talent nor are they given the chance. They simply arrive, are taken to exotic and secluded areas, make their sketches, water colours and oils, and leave.

[420]C. Williams, "A British Artist's Impressions of UAE", AIW vol.3 no.4 (1984), pp.81-2.

Art Styles and Characteristics in the Peninsula.

The paintings made during the 1950s and 1960s throughout the Arabian Peninsula can be characterized by their primitive figurative style. They adhered to no consistent school or style but depicted their subjects realistically and in basic colours. The increase in the number of scholarships granted by the government, and the ensuing exposure to Western art, led to a departure from the old rather rigid subject-matter and a new era of experimentation with different Western art schools and current modes gradually started. Those experiments ranged from in-depth studies to superficial and imitative trials, both of which blindly followed visual shapes without examining the foundations of the Western schools that were being utilized. The most popular styles of painting were Impressionism, Expressionism, Cubism and Surrealism. In the 1960s, the Kuwaiti Abdallah Taqi was the first artist in the area to depart from academic restrictions and turn to abstraction. Oddly, Surrealism has been quite popular among artists in the peninsula. It can be assumed that these artists found in the symbolism and dreamlike signs a means of venting their frustrations and breaking away from their social and cultural inhibitions and restrictions. As in other Islamic countries, a considerable number of painters incorporated Arabic letters and Islamic arabesque motifs in their works. However, there has been no innovation in this kind of painting. In general, the popularity of calligraphic works may be attributed to the fact that they are easily saleable and to a public enjoyment of, and preference for, the written word.

Regardless of style and artistic level, paintings by Gulf artists, whether of cities or landscapes, still-lifes or portraits, realistic or surrealistic, abstract or calligraphic, have one common denominator which is the choice of

subject-matter taken from scenes of everyday life and indigenous culture. The first painter to insist on and propagate local subjects was the Kuwaiti Mojab Dossari to whom we have already referred. Other early artists from the area followed his example. The most common subjects among painters are the sea, the desert, and life in their own communities.

Long before oil was discovered, the sea and the desert isolated the people of the Arabian Peninsula, while remaining a source of inspiration for their poetry. With the discovery of oil, societies in the peninsula were suddenly exposed to fundamental social and economic change at a more rapid pace than in other Islamic and Arab countries. The traditional, conservative communities that had been able to safeguard most of their customs and traditions for centuries, started to lose their grip on the cohesion of their cultural continuity, particularly since oil brought upon them sudden and overwhelming affluence and a massive exposure to the technological and commercial aspects of Western civilization. Faced with this phenomenon, Arabian artists have made an attempt to preserve on canvas their old cultural traditions, by recording for posterity those practices that have disappeared or may well do so with time.

The sudden affluence that befell the Arabian Peninsula created a nouveau riche element in society. The Gulf nouveau riches enjoy political power and wide influence over matters of culture. This class has therefore dictated taste for several decades, affecting the artistic expression in the area.

Until recently, the peninsula had not established direct artistic contacts with the West in the same longstanding way as the countries of the Levant. Western art was manifested in the peninsula through the use of media such as oils, water-colours, gouaches, canvas etc., but not through Western aesthetics. The early works of local artists were mainly concerned with

featuring still-lifes of coffee pots, daggers and dates and traditional landscapes, camel races, sword dances, stallions, market scenes, courtyards, and old mudbrick structures that have been replaced by concrete high-rise buildings. All were executed in an imitative manner whose highly illustrative style, and choice of subject-matter was meant to please a newly wealthy clientele, eager for culture through nostalgia, and alarmed at losing its heritage, yet keen on catching up with the West.

Official patronage by the governments of the oil-producing countries has been instrumental in the development of modern art in the region. A side effect of the lavish patronage given to the arts is the multitude of annual awards and prizes dispensed by the different ministries, departments and artistic societies. Most artists are winners of gold, silver or bronze medals, or certificates of appreciation, some several times over. Consequently these awards have been rendered meaningless in other Arab countries.

Meanwhile, Gulf nationalism has been expressed in the scores of portraits of the ruling kings, amirs and shaykhs, which range from amateurish, naïve renditions to highly professional likenesses, by both native and foreign artists. However, this is not the kind of portraiture that is made under the dictatorships of Saddam Hussein and Hafiz al-Assad. In Arabia, these portraits are a continuation of a more traditional concept, the love of the tribe towards their chief who embodies the role of a guardian and caretaker.

The modern art movements in the countries of the Arabian Peninsula are all relatively recent. They are a good example of art development in an affluent area that lacked historical exposure both to Western aesthetic conventions and to a sophisticated Islamic art heritage. Despite extravagant patronage by governments, no innovations have been generated by their

artists. This indicates that a rich cultural background and exposure to and interaction with other civilizations, cultures and traditions are integral in the development of any art movement. It also begs the question that many Arab intellectuals ask: why do countries with the lowest per-capita income in the world and few resources to support the arts have a thriving modern art movements, with highly expressive artists, who have contributed to contemporary art in the Islamic world? whereas on the other hand, the oil-rich countries, where artists enjoy considerable material advantages, have yet to make a worthwhile contribution.

Part II.

Chapter 15.

Grounding Modern Art in the Local Environment.

By the turn of the century, Western art forms, mainly easel painting and three-dimensional sculpture, had already replaced the traditional arts, among Islamic artists from areas that had an early Western oriented art movement such as Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, and Tunisia. This process formed part of an alienation that has engulfed modern artists. It cut them off completely from the roots of their artistic heritage and forced them to start learning painting and sculpture from naught. They began to study art as novices without any background, by severing all ties with their own visual heritage. Furthermore, as economic, political and military ties with the West were strengthened, the resulting physical and cultural foreign domination led to a loss of confidence in the artists' own heritage, and to an inferiority complex towards the past. Paradoxically, this rupture constituted the first stage of an artistic awakening in the Islamic world. It also came at a time when traditional Islamic art, with the exception of calligraphy, had stagnated.

The development of modern art in the Islamic world is associated with three stages, which apply to almost all Islamic countries regardless of time.

1. The learning stage: The shortest way for the Islamic artist to 'catch up' with Western art was to adapt to its traditions and aesthetics. He was introduced to European works by his Western teachers at the newly created art schools and through paintings in the homes of foreigners, the local aristocracy and rich élite of the artist's country. The artist would copy nature

through portraits, landscapes, and still-lifes of wine bottles and flower vases, done after the classical methods of the Renaissance and the Orientalists. Ironically, this same artist, who so enthusiastically followed the Western example, was surrounded by local architecture and handicrafts, with Islamic characteristics, types and motifs. Yet he completely ignored them for the very simple reason that the output of his own civilization and culture came to represent reactionary values of which he was ashamed, vis-a-vis the newly-imported, progressive ideas coming from the West. The concepts of the West, starting with the French Revolution and Napoleon's Egyptian expedition, as well as the literary, philosophical and artistic movements that had started in Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries, also had the effect of liberating the Islamic artist from the traditions that had weighed him down. They offered a means by which he could realize his national aspirations based on the doctrine of liberty and equality.

2. Self-discovery stage: After being introduced to, and trained in the academic style which was almost extinct in Europe, the Islamic artist gained a measure of confidence. This made him aware not only of the existing discontinuity between his present and the past, but also between himself and the general public, his artistic creativity and the actual world around him. At this second stage, he tried to bridge these disparities by choosing local subjects and themes with which the public could identify. Thus, portraits of peasant women replaced those of nymphs and society ladies, while scenes of Turkish, Lebanese, Egyptian, Iraqi, Iranian and Syrian countrysides were painted profusely. Simultaneously, communications with the West had increased, causing a considerable number of artists to develop from a Western academicism and Impressionism to take up post-impressionist styles. At this second stage, the artist's link with the present and the future were at

best obscure and confused, eventually forcing him to confront a new identity crisis that was to persist through the third stage of his evolution.

3. Search for identity stage: After World War II, Western colonialism in the Middle East was in retreat. People in the region began to turn towards their roots, dig into their heritage, and take a new pride in their nationalism and newly-found political independence. This kind of cultural awakening led to the third stage in the development of contemporary art in the Islamic world. It came about after several decades of relaxing in the security of depicting local scenes through recognized international styles such as Impressionism and Post-impressionism. Gradually, a growing number of Islamic artists woke up to the fact that they were not after all Westerners, no matter how hard they strove to be so. Although they were well-trained in Western art theories and techniques, modern Islamic artists had no artistic identity of their own. Their means of identification was confined to the themes delineated by their immediate environment, which any foreign visiting artist could have portrayed. Thus, Islamic artists confronted a new dilemma. They felt torn between their present, which was so visibly and intellectually influenced by the West, and their past and its traditions, which embodied the only means by which they could safeguard their threatened identity.

During the search for identity stage there were three groups of artists. The first were the ones who continued their work with local subject matter and made the jump from academic figuration and Impressionism to Expressionism, Cubism, Surrealism and even Abstraction without any hesitation. The second were the ones who tried to identify their work with their cultural heritage. The third group were the ones who believed that art

was universal and found no reason to identify with their own culture in their art. Regardless of the style they chose, this third group concentrated on improving the quality of their work in an effort to attain international standards, while disregarding any attempts to give their styles a local character.

The new problem that presented itself to artists who wanted to identify their work with their cultural heritage was how to create a genuine visual form by manipulating their Western training, yet superseding Bedouin portraits, palm trees and mud huts. Following a period of alienation from earlier Islamic art, during which artists were geared towards European artistic trends and techniques, there came a period of self-discovery. In their quest to replace the Western models they had been trained to seek individual contemporary Islamic artists investigated their past. Their search led them to re-establish their bonds with their own cultural patrimony. They delved into their history and went beyond the Islamic period and they tried to examine the factors that had subscribed to the foundation of their civilization before its decline.

During the third stage of their development, which coincided with a period of cultural awakening and reorientation, artists dug into their own history and explored the ancient civilizations that had once flourished in their countries. Egyptians probed Pharaonic and Coptic art; Iraqis drew on Sumerian and Babylonian traditions; the Sudanese reverted to their African and Coptic legacies; the North Africans returned to their African and Berber roots; Jordanians explored their Nabataean past; the Turks investigated their Byzantine and Seljuk patrimony; and the Iranians examined the pre-Islamic periods under the Achaemenids and Sassanians. Consequently, stylized

forms replaced naturalistic renditions in figurative paintings, while folk motifs and iconography became part of expressionist and abstract compositions. Examples include the statues of the Egyptian Mahmoud Mukhtar, who revived Pharaonic traditions in sculpture as we have seen, and the paintings of the Iraqi Ismail Fattah, who repeatedly included massive Babylonian human figures in his compositions (fig. 114). Egyptians Hamid Nada and Minhatallah Hilmi, incorporated hieroglyphic signs in their work (figs. 115, 116). Some artists took up indigenous motifs and incorporated them within their abstract compositions, as did Ahmed Cherkaoui from Morocco and Abdel Basit Khatim from Sudan, who borrowed from Berber and African folk art, respectively (figs. 117, 118).

A second source of inspiration to be explored by contemporary artists in their search for a genuine, contemporary Arab-Muslim identity was Islamic art, particularly two-dimensional miniatures and intricate arabesque designs found in illuminations, metalwork and architectural decoration. Miniatures became a model for painters who sought a replacement for Western naturalistic figurative art, while arabesque patterns constituted a rich repertoire for abstract artists. Fahrelnissa Zeid (1901-1991), a Jordanian artist of Turkish origin, was inspired by Byzantine portraits, mediaeval stained glass windows as well as Turkish miniatures, thus making use of a variety of artistic traditions (fig. 119).

Among artists who turned to the two dimensionality of Islamic art and decoration were Yalçin Gökçebağ from Turkey, Suad Attar from Iraq and Suraya al-Baqsami from Kuwait (figs. 120, 121, 122), while Khairat al-Saleh from Syria reinstated floral and geometric patterns in her paintings. Simultaneously, a number of artists drew on indigenous popular traditions such as shadow theatre, folk tales and local handicrafts. They acquired their

themes as well as their forms from popular legends painted either on glass, fabric or paper, and rearranged them within modern formulations. The Lebanese artist Rafic Charaf (b.1923) first looked into the folk tales of 'Antar and ʿAbla[421] for inspiration, therein discovering some of his own cultural roots (fig. 123). He later reverted to Arabic calligraphy in a symbolic manner, taking verses from the Qur'ān and mixing them with primitive and abstract signs in vivid colours (fig. 124). Khaled Asram (b.1939) from Tunisia and Nuri Abaç (b.1926) from Turkey (figs. 125, 126) were later inspired by the same sources.

Each one of these artists tried to find a style with which he or she could identify, in an attempt to differentiate their works from those of their Western peers. However, these styles were individual experiments whose effects at the time were confined to the particular artist's work. Meanwhile, several artistic groups sprouted throughout the Islamic world before the 1950s whose aim was also to link their work to their heritage and local environment. They included the Çalli Group in Istanbul, the Tunis School, and the Pioneers Group in Baghdad.[422] They painted landscapes from their country, daily activities of ordinary people, as well as social festivities and customs such as weddings and religious ceremonies. However, their main focus continued to be portraiture of local subjects. The principal and foremost means by which members of artistic groups identified with their national culture was through the themes of their art. What mattered to them was the proficiency with

[421]The story of ʿAntar and ʿAbla goes back to the pre-Islamic era and is about a dark skinned hero named ʿAntar who falls in love with his fair cousin ʿAbla whose father refused to give her to him in marriage because of his looks and poverty.

[422]For more information on the Çalli Group, the Tunis School, and the Pioneer Group, see chapters 2, 7, 5 on Turkey, Tunisia and Iraq.

which they depicted their subjects but following the familiar European styles of art.

Local Art Movements.

i. The Society of Artistic Propaganda.

The Society of Artistic Propaganda which was founded in Egypt in 1928 was the first group to concentrate on style rather than subject matter. Its goal was to free contemporary Egyptian art of foreign influences. The Society was headed by Habib Gorgi, an artist-pedagogue, who became disillusioned with contemporary painting. Therefore, he centered his hopes on children. Gorgi believed that every child was born a natural artist whose spontaneous creativity could be developed into original talent, provided he received proper encouragement. He took peasant children from Harraniya village in Giza to his school, and left them on their own to mould their clay figures, without instructing them or criticizing their works. The results were works done in an infantile naïve style, and were not the products of established artists. Gorgi's school of art was later expanded by his son-in-law, the architect Wissa Wassef, and eventually became a world-famous tapestry centre (fig. 127).[423]

ii. The Baghdad Modern Art Group.

The Baghdad Modern Art Group was the first in the Islamic world to succeed in developing a local trend that drew on indigenous artistic traits while taking full advantage of Western art styles and techniques. It was also the first to call for the inclusion of a message within art, by combining local

[423]T.Hussein "Egypt" , Contemporary Art from the Islamic World, p.34.

iconography with international artistic trends. The moving force behind this group was Jawad Salim, who established a distinctively Iraqi artistic style.

Jawad Salim (1921-1961) was the first Arab artist to express a conscious quest for a distinctive Arab style and conduct deliberate experiments along that road. In 1938, Salim was sent on a scholarship to Paris (1938-39). When Germany invaded France, he transferred to Rome (1939-40), but after Italy entered the war, he had to cut his studies short and return to Baghdad. Salim was then appointed head of the Sculpture Department at the Institute of Fine Arts and at the same time worked in the Directorate of Antiquities in Iraq. During this period, he met the group of Polish artists who were in Baghdad during World War II, to whom reference has already been made.[424] They introduced him to Post-impressionist art styles. After the war, Salim was sent to the Slade in London (1946-48) to continue his training.[425]

Salim came to recognize and appreciate the aesthetic values of ancient art while working among the small Summerian statues and colossal Assyrian marbles at the Directorate of Antiquities in Baghdad. He began looking into the history and folk culture of Iraqi society. He took al-Waşitī, the renowned 13th century Abbasid painter, as his model. Salim explored al-Wasiti's illustrations as well as the incised figures on Islamic metalwork of the same period and folk motifs. He discovered the graphic possibilities within Arabic calligraphy and incorporated words and verses into his compositions. However, this attempt was not meant to introduce calligraphy as an important component in his art. It was merely intended to add an authentic cultural

[424]See chapter 5 on Iraq.
[425]Jabra, Juthūr al-fann al-ʿirāqī", pp.19-20.

touch to his paintings. While studying abroad, Salim was also influenced by the works of Henry Moore and Picasso. An example of his westernizing experience is his *Henna Night* where Salim used a linear style, subtracting volume and reducing the shapes to their basic outlines (fig. 128). Salim was probably the first Arab artist to embark on a quest for a national artistic identity within modern concepts. Unlike the pioneer Egyptian and Lebanese artists who painted what they saw of their country's people and landscapes, Salim intellectualized folk motifs as symbols to denote an Iraqi artistic identity. He believed that the artist's duty was to interpret the sentiments of his society by depicting the current events in his country. Thus, he became the mirror of Iraq's social conditions.[426] Salim was a painter and sculptor who executed his most mature paintings in the 1950s, establishing an Iraqi style of painting that drew heavily on formal and folk heritage. His style awakened a latent sense of nationalism and induced many Iraqi artists to emulate him.

Salim had his misgivings about practising painting and sculpture simultaneously. Towards the end of his life, he decided to relinquish painting and concentrate on sculpture, which culminated in the creation of his *Monument of Freedom*, a 50 meter long, and 8 meter wide bas-relief in bronze for which he was commissioned by the new military junta in Iraq in 1958 (fig. 129). The mural, with its 25 connected figures, was conceived as an Arabic verse in the usual distich form, but without actually incorporating any letters.[427] This work, considered to be Salim's masterpiece, embodied his artistic search, concepts and experience of twenty years. In it he was able to materialize his dream of binding Iraqi artistic traits with his Western training.

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[426]S.H.Al Said, Jawād Salīm al-fannān w'al-ākharūn, p.121.
[427]J.I.Jabra, Celebration of Life, p.173-4.

The lines of the composition were inspired by the linear quality of Arabic characters, while the stylized forms were taken from Sumerian and Babylonian sculptures. His style inspired other Iraqi and Arab artists to develop indigenous motifs within their compositions. Ironically, because Salim refused to portray the President of the Revolutionary Council, Abdul Karim Qassim, in one of the monument's figures, he was refused permission to travel abroad for medical treatment and died almost a prisoner in a Baghdad hospital, after a doctor who admired his work gave him a free bed.[428]

In 1951, Salim founded the Baghdad Modern Art Group. Its goal was to localize international art by fostering an historical awareness of Babylonian and Arab traditions, and to express them within current contemporary Western styles of art. The first to issue a manifesto in Iraq, the Baghdad Group of Modern Art, strove to search for an Iraqi artistic identity without disengaging from other cultures and without returning to provincialism. It announced "...a new trend in painting [that] will solve the [artistic] identity problem in our contemporary awakening by following the footsteps of the 13th century [Iraqi] painters (meaning al-Waṣiṭī)."[429] This new generation of artists found the beginning of a guiding light in the early legacy of their forefathers to "...serve local and international culture."[430] The Group took upon itself the task of improving the public's artistic awareness and taste so that it could appreciate modern art.[431] Besides Salim, the Group included Shaker Hassan Al Said (a painter), the late Khalid al-Rahhal (a sculptor), Qahtan ʿAwni (an architect and artist), Faraj ʿAbou (a painter),

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[428]Al Said, Op.cit., p.216.
[429]Mudaffar, "Iraq" , Contemporary Art from the Islamic World, p.161.
[430]Ibid, p.161.
[431] Al Said, Op.cit., p.115.

Mohammad al-Husni (a sculptor), Khalil al-Ward (a sculptor), Abdul Rahman al-Kaylani (a sculptor), Rasul ʿAlwan (a painter), Fadil Abbas (a painter), Jabra Ibrahim Jabra (an art critic and painter) as well as Salim's English-borne wife Lorna, his brother Nizar and sister Naziha, each of whom was an accomplished painter in his or her own right.[432] All the above mentioned artists embarked on a search for identity through the employment of folk motifs and iconogrpahy in Cubist and expressionist styles that would include a message and a philosophy within the work of art. The Baghdad Group of Modern Art thus attempted to establish the foundation for the grounding contemporary Iraqi art in a local environment.

iii. The Old Khartoum School.

Through the calligraphy classes taught at the School of Design in Khartoum, Sudanese artists became aware of the graphic value of calligraphy as early as the mid-1940s. In the mid-1950s, a group of pioneer artists formed the Old Khartoum School, as we have seen. Its main supporters were Osman Waqialla, Ibrahim al-Salahi and Ahmad Shibrain. The group's aim was to marry African cultural traditions from the south, Islamic visual traditions from the north, and local customs. Their motto was 'do not borrow unless you need to' by which they meant to fully explore Arabic calligraphic forms as well as folk motifs. Waqialla took it upon himself to draw the attention of his students to 'the other dimension of calligraphy', regardless of whether it was Arabic or English. He urged them to look into calligraphy and not at it, and visualize letter forms as living elements. Al-Salahi became fascinated by the space created by the letters themselves and the areas between them. Shibrain, however, was attracted to the graceful posture of

[432]Mudaffar, Op.cit., pp.160-2.

the letter-forms, and the intricate weaving of their lines.[433] Unlike Waqialla, who had trained as a calligrapher, both al-Salahi and Shibrain took up calligraphy to develop individual calligraphic styles of painting. The members of the Old Khartoum School succeeded in creating a distinctive trend which was decidedly Sudanese in nature. It employed traditional Islamic motifs and Arabic characters, along with African patterns of human, animal and natural elements. However, the Old Khartoum School did not issue a manifesto, because its members considered it a needless Western gesture. The members followed their instincts and their works emerged naturally to reinterpret their heritage, through modern but indigenous concepts. Instead of embodying a philosophy, their non-thematic and decorative art work gave importance to design and the integration of African motifs with abstract forms of Arabic characters. According to Waqialla, the Old Khartoum School did not develop an explicit style because its members did not work together as a group, although they were bound by a concept. Despite the efforts put forth by its members, they never worked cohesively and dispersed in the mid-1960s, before their efforts had a chance to mature and crystallize into a definite style. Nevertheless, the members of the Old Khartoum School started the calligraphic movement in Sudan.

iv. The Saqqah-khaneh Group.

During the Third Tehran Biennale in 1962, Hosseyn Zenderoudi displayed paintings whose compositions were made up of geometric patterns covered with talismanic writings on a background of yellow, orange, red and black, recalling Shi'ite religious ceremonies. The leading art critic, Kerim

[433]The Fourth Dimension of Arabic Calligraphy, a pamphlet for an exhibition of Waqialla's works at the Islamic Cultural Centre, London 2-13 June, 1987.

Emami, used the word Saqqah-khaneh to describe the feeling invoked by Zenderoudi's new works.[434] The name caught on and became identified with works that drew on subjects from Iran's repertoire of decorative motifs, as well as Persian calligraphy.

Emulating Zenderoudi, other Iranian artists began incorporating religious iconography as well as calligraphy into their compositions, thus popularizing the Saqqah-khaneh movement. Apart from Zenderoudi, Parviz Tanavoli, Faiman Pilaram, Masud Arabshahi, Sadeq Tabrizi, Naser Ovisi and Jazeh Tabatabai' became associated with the Saqqah-khaneh movement.[435] They researched cults, rituals and folk traditions from which they borrowed. Their paintings and sculpture bore direct links to Iran's cultural and religious heritage. Thus, for the first time in Iran, artists broke away from well-known international styles, adopted indigenous forms and iconography, and translated them into a modern artistic language using Western techniques and media.

v. The Casablanca School.

In 1964, a group of painters teaching at the École des Beaux Arts in Casablanca took what was then a daring and unconventional step among Moroccan artists. They introduced the teaching of Arabic calligraphy and local crafts into the École's curriculum. The artists were Farid Belkahia, Mohamed Melihi and Mohamed Chebaa. Belkahia, the Director of the École, believed that the teaching of art in schools of fine arts should be a field of new experimentations, with research carried out in certain areas. Prior to 1964, no courses in Arabic calligraphy were taught in any of the

[434]For the meaning of saqqah-khaneh see chapter 9 on Iran.
[435]Diba, "Iran", Contemporary Art from the Islamic World, p.152.

Moroccan fine arts institutions. Belkahia wanted to demonstrate that apart from its formal application, calligraphy could be a means to investigate the plasticity in its forms that would be implemented in graphic art. Reproductions of local handicrafts were displayed in the classrooms and corridors of the École des Beaux Arts to replace copies of Greek models and European landscapes. In workshops directed by Chebaa and Melehi, the pupils studied the geometric principles of Arabic calligraphy, as well as its constructional values and movement, which could be utilized as signs. They were exposed to the visual richness of popular art (jewelry, rugs, painting on ceilings) and were made to do graphic exercises (geometric forms in black and white) as well as create jewelry and design carpets. The three pedagogue-artists, Belkahia, Chebaa and Melehi, insisted that their pupils work with their hands in order to break the distinction between crafts and fine arts and reconcile the past with the present. This learning experience was followed by a practical experiment. The artist-teachers who became known as the Casablanca School, felt the need to break away from academic teachings and naïve painting of the past on the one hand, and foreign cultural influences on the other. They wanted to allow Moroccan painting the freedom to express its creativity and make its own choices, far from imported academic restrictions. Accordingly, they boycotted the exhibition halls run by foreign embassies, in particular the French. In 1965, they held the first exhibition by an independent group of artists and in 1969, they displayed their work in the square facing Jami' al-Fina Mosque in Marrakesh, where popular crafts and performers such as snake charmers, fire-eaters, and soothsayers come to show their skill.[436]

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[436]M. Sijelmassi, L'Art Contemporain au Maroc, p.24.

Although individual Moroccan artists such as Cherkaoui have used folk signs in their abstract work from the 1950s,[437] the artists of the Casablanca School were the first to work as a group in their search for a local style. Furthermore, they used the same materials employed by native craftsmen when creating their art. Belkahia replaced his oils and canvas with beaten brass, leather, henna, saffron and natural dyes. Melehi painted his abstract works in enamel paints. Chebaa however, continued to use conventional materials. The three artists initiated their students in local design as a model to emulate in place of the European classical aesthetic. In their exhibition, they displayed their work in popular surroundings instead of galleries and exchanged their sophisticated gallery-public for the simple people of the streets. In their works, they drew on forms found in local carpets, tattoos, tribal jewelry as well as ancient Berber and Arabic characters. Members of the Casablanca School succeeded in founding an indigenous artistic movement that gave Moroccan modern art impetus as well as character.

All these indigenous artistic trends, including the Baghdad Group of Modern Art of Iraq, the Old Khartoum School of Sudan, the Saqqah-khaneh of Iran, and the Casablanca School of Morocco shared three principal traits.

1. They identified with their subject matter, which drew on local themes and motifs, though always within the framework of well-known Western styles like Expressionism, Cubism and Abstraction.

2. None of these art movements spread beyond the geographic boundaries of their country of origin.

3. The trends set by these four artistic groups in Iraq, Sudan, Iran and Morocco extended to the generations of artists that followed them, who

[437]See the chapter 8 on Morocco.

continued their search for a local style unaffected by Western principles of art.

Throughout the stage of searching for an identity in the development of modern art in the Islamic world, there was a number of artists who, in spite of drawing on local subject matter, were not particularly satisfied with practising art styles that were alien to their cultural background. Nor were they happy putting forth their feelings on large expressionist and abstract canvases covered with what were called 'warm oriental colours' and two-dimensional folk motifs. Indeed, these artists began doubting the validity of what they had been doing, for they felt that they had done too many paintings which reflected their culture and environment in an Occidental fashion. They questioned whether Western art schools suited their taste and temperament, and whether they answered the needs of their public. It was at this point that individual Islamic artists embarked on a new search for an Arab-Islamic style in modern art. The continuity and revival of calligraphy, the only original Islamic art form to survive the atrophy of the rest of the tradition, was to become instrumental in reuniting contemporary Islamic artists with their cultural roots.

Chapter 16.

Continuity Through Calligraphy.

By the second half of the 20th century, a new art movement started to take shape out of the need felt by Arab and Islamic artists to ground imported art styles in the local environment. They had already proved their aptitude in learning the theories and in applying Western aesthetics as well as refining their ability in diverse media. Artists had reinterpreted their past heritage in a modern artistic language but had reached a stage in their development where they had to rebuild their own artistic personality in order to develop their individuality. They were no longer satisfied with drawing on figures and signs taken from their traditions. They wanted to supersede all that had been done and to reach a truly original context both in execution and content. The solution was to develop a style that could relate to their cultural heritage, while benefitting from their Western artistic training. An answer to these needs emerged in what I term the Calligraphic School of Art - *al-Madrassa al-Khaṭṭiya Fi'l-Fann* - which includes calligraphic painting - taṣwīr khaṭṭī or lawḥa khaṭṭīya and calligraphic sculpture - naḥt khaṭṭī - as opposed to the art of classical Arabic calligraphy - Fann al khaṭṭ al-ʿarabī.

The Calligraphic School of Art.

The Calligraphic School of Art is based on the use of the Arabic alphabet. Although the common term used by most Arab art historian and critics is *al-Madrasa al-Ḥurūfīyah*, which proves to be inadequate and inelegant for it literally translates into 'School of Letterism'. The foundation of the calligraphic movement in modern Islamic art is the traditional Islamic

art of calligraphy. It was the central nature of calligraphy as a medium of Islamic art and aesthetics that led Muslim artists to return to the Arabic alphabet in a search for an artistic identity. It is the application of the calligraphic Arabic letter that gives these words their aesthetic value. Only in cultures where calligraphy exists as an art, like China, Japan and the Islamic world, do we find a visual aesthetic expression based on the use of letters and characters as a graphic element.

Early Calligraphic Artists.

The Calligraphic School of Art emerged as individual young artists working in isolation of each other, both in the West and the Islamic world developed towards this Islamic artistic tradition. Initially, probably none of them envisaged that his or her efforts would flourish into a full-fledged school of art in a span of a few decades. The first Arab artist to carry out research on the relationship between Arabic calligraphy and Western abstract art was Madiha Omar (b.1908). She is an Iraqi painter born in Aleppo of a Circassian father and a Syrian mother. She first attended the Teachers' Training School in Beirut then continued her secondary education at the Sultaniya School in Istanbul. There she was encouraged by the Turkish artist Ali Riza on one of his visits to the school. Omar became one of the first girls to be sent on scholarship to England by the Iraqi government. While studying at the Maria Grey Training College in London, from which she graduated with honours in painting and handiwork in 1933, Omar's artistic talents became apparent to her teachers. Upon her return to Baghdad, she was appointed a painting instructor at the Teachers Training School for Women. In 1937 she took a one-year leave of absence and went to London and Paris to visit museums and galleries and to further acquaint herself with

Western art. After returning to Baghdad, she was appointed head of the Department of Arts and Painting at the Teachers Training School for Women. She held that position until 1942 when she resigned and accompanied her diplomat husband to his new post in Washington D.C. In the United States, her penchant for art became apparent. She took a course in art criticism at George Washington University in 1943 and, in the following year Omar enrolled at the Corcoran School of Art to study painting and sculpture, graduating in 1950.[438]

Since her childhood, Madiha Omar has been fascinated by the calligraphic and arabesque decorations on Islamic buildings in Syria, Turkey and Iraq. However, her interest in the graphic elements of calligraphy did not emerge until her early years in the United States. In 1944/45 she came across a book on calligraphy by Nabia Abbott which included a chart on the development of Arabic characters in North Arabia. Consequently, she discovered that letters were actually abstract forms and began experimenting with them in her work. She showed her first calligraphic paintings to the Islamic art historian, Richard Ettinghausen, who urged her to continue along the same lines and told her that no one had yet used calligraphy in modern Islamic art. Encouraged by Ettinghausen, Omar embarked on a new experiment that culminated in an exhibition of 22 of her paintings at the Public Library at Georgetown in Washington, in 1949. This was the first-ever exhibition of modern Islamic calligraphic works of art, and it took place in a Western capital (fig. 130).[439] Accompanying the exhibition, Omar wrote an English declaration entitled *Arabic Calligraphy: an element of inspiration*

[438]Interview with Madiha Omar, Amman, 21/10/1992.
[439]Interview with Madiha Omar, Amman, 21/10/1992.

in abstract art, She explained how, during her art studies in the United States, she had come to analyze Arabic letters and discovered how their graphic qualities had evolved over the centuries, culminating in their present forms. For her, each letter, in addition to its plastic shape, contained an individual meaningful significance. For example, the letter ʿain ع, (which has no equivalent sound in English), apart from its cursive configuration, signifies the eye with which man experiences sight and improves his knowledge, as well as a water spring which is the source of life. Omar's style wavered between realism and abstraction, she used Arabic characters as the main components of her semi-abstract paintings, transforming them from simple outward shapes into animated and meaningful figures that intrinsically contained certain concepts. By reducing her letters to their basic shapes, she liberated them from the confines of words and transformed them into intellectual and expressive images. Omar saw in her letters perfect forms with dynamic properties that embodied abstract and symbolic meanings as well as particular ideas.

The Iraqi Jamil Hamoudi (b.1924) began his art career in Baghdad as a self-taught artist. In 1941, he sculpted busts in a naturalistic manner and became acquainted with the Polish artists who have been previously mentioned. In 1944, Hamoudi simultaneously taught drawing and history of art at a Baghdad school, while attending classes at the School of Fine Arts, from which he graduated in 1945. In 1947, he was sent by the government to Paris to continue his research in art. He took courses in drawing, painting, sculpture and art history at the École des Beaux Arts, Académie Julian and the École du Louvre. During the same year, Hamoudi began to write a thesis on Assyrian-Babylonian art at the Faculté des Lettres of the Université de

Paris, while carrying out research on epigraphy and Assyrian-Babylonian languages at the École des Hautes-Études.[440] During his stay in France, Hamoudi experienced a reaction against Western materialistic culture. By reverting to the abstraction of the arabesque, the spirituality found in Arabic calligraphy, and also modern European aesthetics, Hamoudi tried to unite his Eastern heritage with Western techniques.

Throughout his career as an artist, Hamoudi rarely produced a calligraphic work which was devoid of figures. At the beginning in the 1940s, he worked within the confines of a surrealistic style, figurative portraiture and nudes, and then moved on to a cubist trend in which he incorporated letter forms in the composition (fig. 131). At times, he depicted landscapes in a linear manner. Hamoudi's calligraphy began to evolve in the 1970s. By then, he had developed an expressive style which mixed letters and words with pictorial forms. Usually, the word which was the title of the painting would be integrated within the plastic composition, in both shape and colour. An example is his painting *Ramadān*, which represents the two figures of a man and a woman sitting in front of a food tray and the word Ramadān constructed at the bottom of the painting as part of the composition (fig. 132). In another painting called *Man and civilization*, he mixes the shapes of a minaret and a woman with the words al-insān wa'l ḥadāra "man and civilization" (fig. 133). Since the 1980s, Hamoudi's style has attained maturity in both form and colour.

Jamil Hamoudi claims to have initiated the application of Arabic calligraphy in modern Arab art as early as 1943. In 1986, he produced two calligraphic paintings which he claimed were done in 1945. However, the Iraqi art historian and critic, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, as well as the painter and

[440]P.Balta, Jamil Hamoudi, p. 111.

art historian Shaker Hassan Al Said, a contemporary of Hamoudi, both confirm that the artist had not worked on calligraphy until he went to Paris in 1947.[441]

By the mid-1950s, other Arab and Islamic artists had become aware of the value of calligraphy in plastic works. One such artist was the Lebanese Said Akl (b.1926), who first trained at the Académie Libanaise des Beaux Arts before going to Paris. He lived there from 1951 to 1954, devoting himself to the study of art and research. On later trips to the French capital, Akl visited the studios of Waldemar George, Marc Saint-Saëns and Jean Picart Le Doux. In 1954, Akl painted his first canvas using calligraphic signs to build up an abstract composition (fig. 134).[442] His works, which were almost purely cerebral, gave the impression of spontaneity born of a candid and naïve imagination. Akl used letters from the Arabic as well as Latin alphabets in their abstract forms, either linked by handwriting or separated by geometric and irregular shapes. In the 1970s, Akl developed simplified calligraphic symbols, that stylistically blended with the whole composition (fig. 135). Throughout his career, Akl's treatment of epigraphy has been within the realm of abstraction.

Another artist involved in calligraphy is Wajih Nahle (b.1932), also from Lebanon. Nahle attended Moustafa Faroukh's studio between 1948 and 1953 where he mastered the technique of academic realism and the use of colour.[443] He began incorporating calligraphy into his work in the early 1950s, thus commencing his search for indigenous forms and an Arab style at

[441]Interviews with J.I.Jabra, 21/7/1992 and S.H.Al Said, 27/7/1992, Amman.
[442]Lahoud, Contemporary Art in Lebanon, pp.137-8.
[443]Ibid., p.257.

an early stage in his artistic development. He drew his first calligraphic work in 1954, the same year as Saïd Akl. However, unlike Akl, Nahle's drawing was figurative, composed of words and sentences in the tradition of classical Iranian calligraphic figures (fig. 136). Nahle continued to develop his compositions by incorporating traditional motifs from classical miniatures with Qur'anic verses and alphabetical characters. It was not until later that Nahle abstracted the letters and made them the sole component of his compositions (fig. 137). On the whole, his calligraphic works vary between classicism and modernity.

Meanwhile, the Sudanese artists and founders of the Old Khartoum School, Osman Waqialla, Ibrahim al-Salahi and Ahmad Shibrain, had begun experimenting with Arabic characters in their paintings. Osman Waqialla (b.1925) graduated from both Gordon Memorial College and the School of Design in Khartoum in 1945 and 1946, respectively. He was among the second group of Sudanese scholarship students to study abroad. After graduating from Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts in 1949, Waqialla returned to Sudan and taught with the pioneer pedagogue Shafik Shawki at the School of Design of University College in Khartoum. Waqialla then left to Cairo to study at the School of Arabic Calligraphy, where he was trained by the professor of calligraphy Sayyid Ibrahim. He graduated in 1951. Along with Shafik Shawki, Waqialla founded the College of Fine Arts in Khartoum where he taught painting between 1949 and 1954. He was also a founder of the Sudanese Literary Guild (1950) and the Association of Sudanese Artists (1951). In 1955, the BBC employed Waqialla in their Arabic service, so he moved to London where he has since settled with his family. In the cosmopolitan environment of London, Waqialla benefitted

from its museums, galleries, libraries, and contact with the latest developments in Western art.[444]

Waqialla is mainly a calligrapher who seeks to free calligraphy of its binding rules, by exploring its graphic qualities. He first started trying out calligraphic forms within a modern context in the mid-1940s while still in Khartoum. Despite his exposure to Western art after moving to London, Waqialla has continued his work in Arabic calligraphy. He manipulates his formal training as calligrapher to create both traditional and modern works. He executes works in the classical Ottoman Tajwīd style, which is still used in manuscripts and architectural decoration. Simultaneously, he creates modern calligraphic paintings in which he manipulates the graphic quality of the letters within a thematic treatment. At times, Waqialla includes newspaper collages with gouache and water-colour in his abstract compositions (fig. 138). Calligraphy and calligraphic compositions are the means by which he asserts his Arab-Sudanese identity within an international aesthetic framework.

Ibrahim al-Salahi (b.1930), a student of Waqialla, studied at Gordon Memorial College in Khartoum. After graduating in 1951, he worked as an art teacher at Wadi Sayidna Secondary School near Omdurman. In 1954, al-Salahi was sent on a scholarship to the Slade in London (1954-1957). During his stay in Europe, he visited Florence in order to enhance his knowledge of Renaissance art. In 1957, he returned to Sudan to become head of the Painting Department at the School of Fine and Applied Arts in Khartoum. In 1962, Unesco sent al-Salahi on a tour to the United States, South America, Paris and London.[445] After returning to Sudan, he started searching for a

[444]Interview with O.Waqialla, London, 28/7/1992.
[445]A.Bahnassi, Al-fann al-ḥadīth fī'l-bilād al-ʿarabīyah, p.59.

Sudanese artistic identity by travelling throughout the country to record local architecture and designs used in decorating utilitarian objects such as utensils and prayer rugs. Al-Salahi explored Coptic manuscripts, trying to discover the arts of African Sudan through them. He also became fascinated by the ingenuity of Islamic art. Al-Salahi's previous knowledge of Coptic manuscripts led him to experiment with Arabic calligraphy which he began to include in his paintings. In calligraphy, al-Salahi saw a means of communication as well as a pure aesthetic form (fig. 139).

Ahmad Mohamed Shibrain is considered one of the pioneers in the development of modern Sudanese art. He is a painter, graphic artist, wood-carver and teacher, and works with different media using cultural elements taken from various sources including Islamic, Nubian, Meroitic and African. Shibrain was one of the initiators of the Old Khartoum School, and he became first, Secretary General of the Council of Arts and Letters (1963-1966) and then Dean of the College of Fine Arts in Khartoum (1975-1980).[446]

Shibrain works in etchings with inkwashes but his best pieces are his carved wooden platters in which he embodies his country's different artistic influences and techniques. Carved wood is a traditional Sudanese material and large carved platters were used to serve food to important guests. Shibrain carves the convex surface of a disc and stains the patterns with natural dyes that are used in local crafts, to render compositions made up of Arabic characters and African tribal iconographic symbols. Alongside the indigenous media and the techniques of carving and staining, the African influence in Shibrain's *Untitled* disc (fig. 140) is apparent in the uniform decorative lines and dots, borrowed from folk handicrafts such as calabash,

[446]Contemporary Art from the Islamic World, p.252.

as well as the stylized Arabic script which seems to be part of the integrated African motifs. He employs calligraphy as a visual element embued with religious and spiritual values. In his culture, any written piece of paper is revered and should not be defiled because whatever words it carries might have been mentioned in the Qur'an, therefore newspaper fragments found on the ground, are picked up, folded and put in a wall crevice or a tree. Shibrain combines calligraphy with local decorative signs to benefit from his country's cross-cultural heritage of Islamic and African traditions, to which he is sensitive. He chooses wood for its durability and considers his carvings both a revival of the past and a medium that interprets a contemporary form of art. Shibrain looks at artistic creativity as a never ending physical and cerebral exercise which simultaneously carries a visual as well as a mental message and is in constant motion through new experiments and research.[447]

Hosseyn Zenderoudi (b.1937) first studied art at the Secondary School of Fine Arts for Boys, before going on to the School of Decorative Arts in Tehran. He exhibited his calligraphic works for the first time at the Third Tehran Biennale in 1962, when they were described by the art critic Kerim Emami as Saqqah-khaneh works, and the expression came to define a trend in art that draws on Shi'ite folk heritage. Zenderoudi, the initiator of the Saqqah-khaneh School in Iran, considers himself an international artist who resides in France. However, he admits that Islamic symbols and motifs "exist within one's own blood,"[448] and eventually, they involuntarily appear in the work of the artist. Zenderoudi claims never to have used epigraphy for its absolute beauty, but for its textual importance and the mental impressions

[447]Interview with Ahmad Shibrain, Omdurman, 25/2/1988.
[448]"An Artist for the Wider World" Interview with Hosseyn Zenderoudi, Eastern Art Report, III, no.4 (1991-92), p.42.

that only calligraphy can provide. He prefers to use the word "writing" instead of "calligraphy".[449] Despite Zenderoudi's statement concerning the reason behind his incorporation of epigraphy in his work, the script he employs in his paintings is always classical. His series of silkscreens on the theme *Homage to a Master Calligrapher* (fig. 141) which pays tribute to a calligrapher through the words of the Qur'ānic Sūrat al-Fātiḥa, are just such an example. The artist superimposes verses of repeated Thuluth script over boldly painted backgrounds that have no ties with any traditional calligraphic work. He thus mixes a traditional religious text with a modernistic manner of execution and medium.

Zenderoudi believes that he was responsible for the development of modern calligraphic painting in the Arab world.[450] He could well be the founder of the Saqqah-khaneh School in Iran, but the calligraphic school in the Arab world had already come into existence before the 1960s as we have seen with the work of Madiha Omar. Furthermore, two other Iranian artists had already employed calligraphy in their works before Zenderoudi. One of these was Mohammad Saber Fiyouzi (1909-73) who experimented with calligraphic paintings after World War II, though he never exhibited his work during his lifetime. The other was Naser Assar (b.1928) who showed works based on calligraphic lines in 1953, while living in Paris. Zenderoudi's advantage however, was that he received an early exposure, both locally and internationally, after winning a prize at the Paris Biennale in 1958 and then at the Sao Paolo Biennale,[451] and thus he became well known.

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[449]Ibid, p.41.
[450]Ibid, p.41.
[451]Dagher, Al-ḥurūfīya al-ʿarabīya fann wa hawīyah, p.29.

Each of the above mentioned artists worked alone, in total isolation from his contemporaries. In Washington, Paris, Beirut, Khartoum, and Tehran each young artist who was experimenting with calligraphy thought that he or she was the first to embark on a new artistic discovery. In fact, Ahmad Shibrain, who lived in Khartoum, was unaware of the work done by his two countrymen, Waqialla and al-Salahi, who were living in the same city.[452] As for Jawad Salim, despite incorporating words and sentences in his paintings in the mid-1950s, he cannot be considered a calligraphic artist or a follower of the calligraphic school of art. Salim never used calligraphy as a central component in his compositions. The words in his works were meant to be a suggestion in order to clarify and support the message of the painting and help the public comprehend it.[453] Although the formations of his shapes, in particular those in the *Monument of Freedom*, were taken from the horizontal and vertical flow of Arabic epigraphy, it cannot be ignored that the strong figurative trend in Salim's work supersede any calligraphic suggestions.

In the light of the manner in which calligraphic art evolved, it is difficult to pinpoint the artist who launched the calligraphic school of art in the Islamic world. However, by holding the first-ever exhibition in Washington D.C. in 1949, comprising strictly calligraphic works and accompanying it with a written statement, it can be fairly assumed that Madiha Omar was the first artist in the modern Islamic world to formally inaugurate the calligraphic school of art. Furthermore, she became the first artist to display calligraphy in the Arab world during her exhibition in Baghdad in 1952.

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[452]Ibid, pp.27-8, Interview with Waqialla, 28/7/1992 and.
[453]S.H.Al Said, Jawād Salīm al-fannān w'al-ākharūn, p.113.

In the 1960s the calligraphic movement in art gained momentum, reaching its peak in the 1980s. Artists throughout the Islamic world discovered in calligraphy a means to assert their identity as well as to ascertain their artistic versatility in a personal creative manner far removed from Western traditions. Even Turkish artists who had been alienated and disconnected from the Arabic alphabet since Atatürk's 1928 language reform, began using calligraphic forms in their plastic works. Such examples are the works of Adnan Turani (b.1925) who included obscure letter shapes in his *Abstract* compositions (fig. 142), those of Erol Akyavaş (b.1932) who integrated legible religious sentences in his abstractions to play an explanatory role in his ṣūfī series *Passion of al-Ḥallāj* (fig. 143), and the abstract series *Homage to Calligraphy*, by the New York based artist Burhan Doğançay (fig.143). However, for an obvious reason, calligraphic art in Turkey has not been as widespread among artists as in the Arab countries and Iran.

By the early 1990s, the tide of calligraphic trends in art had started to ebb. They were replaced with various tendencies towards realism and figurative renditions. Nevertheless, a considerable number of calligraphic artists continued their work and research while developing and perfecting their styles. The calligraphic school is more apparent in paintings than in sculpture, though a number of ceramicists have started using letters in their work.

A disadvantage of the calligraphic school is the amount of poor quality work that has passed itself off as calligraphic art. Calligraphic works that contain classical scripts and religious texts, do not require a connoisseur in modern art to appreciate them. Consequently, many individuals who dabble in art as well as a few established artists, have produced works in which

calligraphy was exploited to please the general taste and appeal to the religious sensitivity of the public, without having any artistic value. The aim of these artists has been material gain through commercialization. Such works are excluded from this study.

Chapter 17.

Subjects and Styles of the Calligraphic School of Art.

I. Subjects of the Calligraphic School of Art.

In term of subject matter, the calligraphic school of art treats two main themes.

1. The first theme in modern calligraphic art is of a religious nature. Works that deal with religious subjects communicate either a spiritual or a moral message through quotations from the Qur'an, the Traditions of the Prophet, one or more of the attributions of God, or more seldom, just a simple classical proverb. Some works are composed of a single letter or a number of individual letters as opposed to quotations. These letters carry an iconographic meaning such as the ones at the beginning of Qur'anic verses. For example, Alif, Lām, Mīm, or Nūn, immediately convey to the viewer a sacred significance. Examples of religious subjects are found in the oil on canvas painting by the Kuwaiti painter Abdul Rasul Salman (b.1946) *Allāhu Akbar* (God is Glorious) where the writing in a free-hand style is the central form around which the composition revolves (fig. 145). Another example is the silkscreen print *Huwa Allāh al Awal, Allāh al-Ākhir* (He is God the First, God the Last) (fig. 146) by Kamal Boullata (b.1942) in which the artist employed geometric Kufic in a circular formation with overlapping shades of greens and blues and a red square at the centre to denote the eternity of the Creator.

2. The second theme in calligraphic art is of a secular nature and divides into three sub-topics: socio-political, literary and decorative. Generally, the socio-political is tied up with a certain concept, either political, social or

both. This kind of work which manipulates artistic aesthetics as an instrument or vehicle of social criticism and political opposition is new in the Islamic world. Rarely has the art of calligraphy or any other art form in classical Islamic artistic traditions been exploited as a means to reflect the social or political conditions of a nation. The earliest example of socio-political subjects in modern Islamic art started in Turkey during the second decade of the 20th century at the time of the War of Independence. It was bolstered after Kemal Atatürk came to power. In the 1920s, the theme of Egyptian nationalism was manifested in the sculptures of Mahmoud Mukhtar, who paved the way for other Egyptian artists to express their nationalist sentiments in their art. During the 1940s, as the Syrians struggled for their independence, a few artists began to include nationalistic subjects in their repertoire.[454] After the first Arab-Israeli War in 1948, the socio-political trend gained momentum in the Arab world. At its inception, it was manifested in figurative works and only in the 1960s did it occur in calligraphic paintings, becoming widely used, following the defeat of the Arabs in the Six Day War of 1967.

The most important factor in the composition of the socio-political calligraphic painting is the significance embodied in the message itself and its intellectual effect on the literate viewer. A major subject has been the Palestinian problem, which has dragged on since the late 1940s, causing a great deal of pain and disappointment among the Arabs towards their leadership and the super powers. It has been further aggravated by a realization of international double standards in dealing with all Arab-Islamic issues. A sense of despondency prevailing among Islamic intellectuals, particularly the Arabs, has been reflected in their literary and artistic output.

[454]See the chapters 2, 3, 10 on Turkey, Egypt and Syria.

In the plastic arts, this despondency bred a sense of inadequacy that either fell short of, or superseded visual imagery. This sense of powerlessness led artists to reinforce their figurative art with written texts in order to strengthen the impact of the message they wanted to convey. Almost all political paintings pertaining to the Palestinian problem are distinguished by a depressing element that sometimes borders on the macabre. Other calligraphic paintings also deal with general issues or social statements on poverty or social injustice and sometimes the message combines more than one meaning. An example of socio-political art is found in the work of the Palestinian Adnan Yahya (b.1960). He has included in his mixed-media expressionistic painting *Had I not Survived* (fig. 147) verses of poetry to emphasize the tragedy of his countrymen living under occupation.

Another subject of secular calligraphic work is literary in nature, either in prose or poetry, and relates either to classical or modern Arabic, Persian and Urdu literature. Throughout the history of Islam, belles-lettres have been closely connected to visual, decorative expressions. Poetry intertwined with geometric and floral arabesque covered the walls of 11th-century al-Hamra Palace in Granada, while verses of Sa'di and Nizami were often incorporated within miniatures illustrating their poems during the Safavid period. When the modern calligraphic art movement appeared, artists of different generations using various media, incorporated prose and poetry into their paintings, etchings, sculptures and ceramics. At times, whole poems were included in a work of art. For example, the Lebanese artist Etel Adnan (b.1925) delineated the verses of Iraqi contemporary poet Abdul Wahab al-Bayati in a clear script, emphasized by thick lines of water-colours (fig. 148). Thus by presenting literary themes, the modern calligraphic artist is reverting

to such old artistic tradition in Islam, but presenting it in a new means of expression, using modern media and techniques.

As for decorative works of calligraphic art, they generally manipulate the aesthetic configuration of the Arabic letter in a purely abstract manner. They transmit the Western value of 'art for art's sake' and are devoid of any moral or cultural significance. The Jordanian Rafik Lahham (b.1932), in his *Untitled* oil on canvas (fig. 149), has mixed Arabic characters in Thuluth script as well as diacritical marks. Although legible, the letters, as pure graphic shapes, convey no message and their value lies in their arrangement and colour. Another artist, Yussef Ahmad, a Qatari, has drawn a multitude of calligraphic signs in ink on raw canvas, to form an abstract composition in *A Trial for Unity*. (fig. 150) In his work, Ahmad uses letters for their variety of shapes, to build up large abstract forms.

The popularity of Arabic calligraphy among Islamic artists can be attributed to several causes. First, calligraphy not only forms a link with the artist's past religious, literary and artistic heritage, but it is also a living present which is still effective in his present existence. Second, the versatility of Arabic calligraphy, either in its regulated or its free styles, offers the modern artist unlimited plastic and graphic possibilities which can be manipulated and executed through traditional as well as modern techniques and media. Likewise, calligraphy can be employed in the depiction of spiritual as well as commonplace subjects. Finally, Arabic calligraphy appeals to and satisfies the literary aesthetic of Muslims, especially Arabs, whose artistic expression since pre-Islamic times has been mainly poetry. What an artist cannot express figuratively, he can express in writing. Likewise, what a viewer cannot comprehend visually, he can read in

a work of art. One word can explain a plastic composition by conveying a mental image from the artist to the receiver.

II. Styles of the Calligraphic School.

The Calligraphic School of Art in the Islamic world has thus far not been properly analyzed and categorized either by art historians and critics or by artists, not least because the development of the various calligraphic styles was not a concerted group effort or the product of one local school of art. It emerged out of diverse trends that evolved from each artist's individual experiments and preferences. The artist who employed epigraphy in his or her compositions did so on a personal basis without knowing what the result of his/her work would bring, and not necessarily in a self-conscious search for an artistic identity related to his/her cultural history. As for the art groups that called for the inclusion of calligraphy in their work, such as the Old Khartoum School and the Saqqah-khaneh Group, none of their members proposed a clear definition of how calligraphy should be employed in art. They formed loose groups who agreed, in principle, to assert their artistic identity through the use of Arabic calligraphy as well as other folk and indigenous motifs. Unlike groups in the West such as the Impressionists, Cubists, etc., groups of artists in the Islamic world never framed their ideas within a clear set of concepts. Consequently, it took a considerable amount of time for the different calligraphic art styles to develop and mature. Meanwhile, the majority of calligraphic artists have moved from one style to another, at times unconsciously, believing that all are uniform, as long as they include Arabic characters, regardless of type of script or its place in the composition. In fact the artists themselves through their work, have unconsciously divided the calligraphic theme in art into three main styles.

By examining the spectrum of calligraphic works, one finds that there is a Pure Calligraphic style, an Abstract Calligraphic style and Calligraphic Combinations. Each of these styles split into two or more sub-styles. In this thesis, the origins of the terminology for the first two are related to the type of script employed and its place within the composition of the work. The third style, Calligraphic Combination, is so called because it combines both script and figurative subject-matter. All through, the typology has been determined according to the nature of the script and the role it plays in the composition of the work of art.

The rest of this chapter will establish, identify and define the typology of calligraphic styles which exist within the modern Calligraphic School of Art, giving examples of artists who are associated with each.

The three main calligraphic styles defined here - **Pure Calligraphy**, **Abstract Calligraphy** and **Calligraphic Combinations** - have gradually developed since the 1950s. They are categorized according to their use among contemporary Islamic artists, and each style has several minor offshoots. It should be noted here that rarely does an artist subscribe to one style in particular. Artists using calligraphy usually move freely between the various styles that make up the repertoire of the Calligraphic Style. This fluidity makes it difficult to circumscribe an individual artist in a particular category. However, some calligraphic artists have kept one style throughout their career. Whenever possible, these artists in particular will be cited as examples, and their development will be followed in more detail than that of their peers who have shifted between various calligraphic trends.

I. Pure Calligraphy.

The first major style of the Calligraphic School of Art is **Pure Calligraphy**. It includes works composed only of letter-forms that make up both the background and the foreground of the composition. The main component within this category is the Arabic alphabet which forms the entire subject-matter and composition. It can be a letter or a group of letters, a word, words, sentences, paragraphs, or any combination. It should be noted that any letter from the Arabic alphabet, apart from its visual and graphic impact, even when taken on its own, has a certain significance. In the mind of the literate viewer, who is thus also the reader, it transmits connotations on more than one level.

Out of the Pure Calligraphic style the following four branches have developed:

I: A. The Neo-classical Style.

The first branch is the **Neo-classical** style that is based on one of the traditional schools of classical Arabic calligraphy of the past and adheres to an established set of rules in its execution. This branch endeavors to revive the classical art of Islamic calligraphy with very little change and innovation in scripts and motifs. The modernity lies mainly in the conception and framework of the work, and the materials used by the artist. Works in the Neo-classical style are directly related to traditional calligraphy, although sometimes the artist may present a new arrangement of classical motifs in his composition. Neo-classical works, despite being executed through new media and modern techniques, are the authentic modern descendants of

classical Ottoman and Persian calligraphy. They usually consist either of religious or literary subjects. Within this category are the works of Khairat al-Saleh and Wajih Nahle.

Khairat al-Saleh (b.1940), a Syrian, is a self-taught artist who read English literature at Cairo University before going to England where she did her post graduate studies in English poetry and drama. She engaged in research at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Library where she studied illuminated Islamic manuscripts. Consequently, al-Saleh decided to take part in reviving her Arab heritage through her literary work as well as her art. She wrote a book on Arab fables and learnt techniques for the application of gold leaf. She was inspired by Islamic illuminations and European mediaeval manuscripts. Al-Saleh has attended Richmond Adult Community College from 1987 to train in pottery and etching at their studios. Eventually, she added a new repertoire to her graphics. She began making works on paper, including different styles of Kufic script in its geometric, floriated and foliated forms. Her paintings contained either a letter, a word, a Qur'anic verse or a line of poetry with imagery that strained to embody the significance of the writing. In her painting *The Creation* (Fig. 151) in which she uses gouache, ink and gold leaf on paper, al-Saleh has employed a western Kufic script in thick embossed gold strokes on a royal blue background flecked with golden spots. The Qur'ānic text which is the central theme of the painting deals with the creation and is rendered in the form of an open page from the Qur'ān. Framing the two pages are decorative elements of trees, flowers, clouds and waves, illuminated in miniature technique. Vegetal decorative forms are also reproduced near the text, on the inside pages. Al-Saleh has used a classical script of a known Qayrawani calligrapher of the 11th century, ʿAli al-Warrāq. Yet although her

decorations are also inspired by traditional illumination, they are less rigid than her models which were never meant to hang on a wall. In Islamic culture, pages from the Qur'an were never torn out to be framed, and the illusion of two open pages in a free-standing painting is entirely modern. Moreover, such heavy illumination was usually meant for frontispieces and endpieces of a manuscript. Al-Saleh has therefore been innovative in exploiting traditional forms of the art of the book, within the modern concept of a free standing painting which incorporates a devout message as well as aesthetic value.

The Lebanese artist Wajih Nahle (b.1932) also began his calligraphic paintings in the neo-classical style. His first calligraphic work in ink on paper (1954), *The Warrior*, reveals the influence of Iranian figurative calligraphy[455]. Two examples done during what he calls his Golden Period, between 1970 and 1973, are the neo-classical paintings *Āyat al-Kursī* and *Al-Fātiḥa*, both in gold leaf and polyester on wood (figs. 152, 153). In the former, Nahle wrote a verse from the Qur'ān in Kufic script and put it within a frame that surrounds a square filled with intertwined floral and geometric arabesque designs. The three central patterns in the square, which are the focus of the composition, contain a repetition of the Basmalah. In the latter painting, Nahle divides his surface into two parts. In the upper part, which occupies more than two-thirds of the composition, there is a square in which he creates a shamsa made up of a polygon surrounded by Sūrat al-ikhlāṣ. Nahle frames the Qur'ānic text with 12 rosettes that either encircle calligraphic and geometric patterns or stylized human figures of a horseman, two musicians, birds and a half-human, half-animal figure which could be a reference to al-burāq (the horse on which the Prophet Muhammad ascended

[455]See figure 136 in the illustrations, volume II.

to heaven). All the figures in the rosettes are clearly repetitions of those found in classical Islamic miniatures as well as on pottery and in metalwork decoration. In the lower third of the composition, there is a rectangle of three equal lines, the upper and lower ones containing the text of Sūrat al-fātiḥa (the opening sūra in the Qur'ān) while the one in the middle consists of an arabesque design. Nahle's affinity to traditional calligraphic works in both paintings, is apparent in the Kufic script in his texts, the illumination in gold leaf, and the arabesque and classical figurations. His personal, modern innovation is in the arrangement of his composition. For example, in *Āyat al-Kursī*, he uses the text as a decorative frame for the composition instead of the reverse. In *Al-Fātiḥa*, the text is at the bottom of the painting instead of at the centre. A second innovation is the use of a new material, polyester, for the calligraphic work. The two given examples demonstrate how contemporary artists, while adhering to classical scripts and decoration, develop modern renditions without falling into the trap of tedious repetition or excessive innovation.

I: B. Modern Classical Style.

The second branch of the Pure calligraphy style is the **Modern classical** which manipulates a traditional script within a modern arrangement and composition. In this style, the artist produces one of the traditional scripts in a new rendition, experimenting with colours, forms, composition and media. He might elongate the letters of the script, although without affecting the basic rules that govern their disposition. All artists who follow this style combine the discipline of a traditional calligrapher with the freedom of a modern artist. They use classical scripts but they have the liberty to

rearrange the calligraphy in a contemporary composition be it in colour, texture or layout.

The artist to reach the greatest perfection of the Modern Classical style is the Egyptian ṣāniʿ,[456] Ahmad Moustafa (b.1943). In 1966, he graduated with distinction from the Faculty of Fine Arts at Alexandria University where he was immediately employed as a full-time lecturer in painting and stage design (1966-73). Between 1974 and 1976, he took sabbatical leave and studied advanced printmaking at the Central School of Art and Design in London, finishing his MA in 1978. He became a part-time lecturer on Arabic calligraphy at the same school between 1980 and 1982 and, in 1989, he finished his Ph.D thesis which was the first to be given out by St. Martin's College of Art and Design in collaboration with the British Museum. In his thesis, Moustafa dealt with the search for a logical explanation for the significance of "proportional script", al-khaṭṭ al-mansūb, defined by the Abbasid calligrapher Ibn Muqla (886-940 AD).[457] Moustafa has lived in London since 1974, painting and working on his research.

Despite his training as a modern figurative artist, Moustafa has succeeded in mastering the art of classical calligraphy and utilizes its long-established traditions in developing his own style. In the true sense of an Islamic artist, Moustafa combines the perfection of skill and training with talent and innovation. Furthermore, his skill and dexterity in three-dimensional drawing enable him to manipulate optical illusion through script, creating Qur'anic still-lifes and scriptural landscape.

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[456]The concept of a ṣāniʿ in traditional Islamic culture is the person who possesses skill and creativity in executing his art. The closest translation in English would be a person who is both a craftsman and an artist.

[457] From the catalogue of Ahmad Moustafa's exhibition at the Royal College of Art 1990, unpaginated.

In his early works such as *Qur'ānic Fugue* (fig. 154), Moustafa uses separate overlapping and inter-linked letters to create a composition in which the foreground and the background compete to take control of the painting. He produces a visual tension that has become a basic characteristic in all his work. Moustafa's most important and recent paintings deal with Qur'ānic verses executed in super imposed, three-dimensional, spatial forms. They transmit a sense of the metaphysical, derived from the written word and its meaning. In his *Still Life of Qur'ānic Solids* (fig. 155) an oil and water-colour painting on handmade paper, the scriptural palette determines the planes, shapes and sizes of all the forms in the composition. The floor pattern is based on verse 2 of Sūrat Āl ʿImrān; "God, there is no deity save Him, the Ever-lasting, the Self-Subsistent Fount of All Being" (Qur'ān III:2), while the suspended three dimensional shapes, reiterate; "Behold, everything have we created in due measure and proportion." (Qur'ān LIV: 49).

In Moustafa's taut compositions, the superimposition of two different scripts such as geometric Kufic over cursive Thuluth, plus the optical effect of visual deception, not only animate his compositions, but add a spirituality outside the limits of time, space and place. In his two Aubusson tapestry pieces; *The Invisible Warriors of Badr* and *Trilogy of the Arab Horse*, (figs. 156, 157) the compositions supersede regional Arab trends while adhering to the spirit of Islamic aesthetics.

Moustafa's almost perfect and accomplished calligraphic paintings combine the strength of tradition with the originality of innovation, interpreted through the sensitive brush of the master artist. In his calligraphic vistas, *The Attributes of Divine Perfection*, *Infinite Interior*, and *God is the Light of Heaven and Earth* (all in oil and water-colour on handmade paper), (figs. 158, 159, 160) which he has executed without any mechanical or

electronic aid,[458] Moustafa has managed to create a complicated visual imagery. His aim is not to prove his skill or talent but, in a very humble way, to show the infinite power of God, the Ultimate Ṣāniʿ. His message is simple: if a mere mortal can achieve such complicated beauty, what can an Infinite Creator do![459]

Ahmad Moustafa has been recognized in London as a major artist and he was the first Arab artist to be given an exhibition at the Royal College of Arts in 1990. Through such recognition, he has proved that contemporary Islamic art can be universal.

The most recurrent subjects in the Modern Classical style are those related directly or indirectly, to religion. However, not all works employing traditional scripts deal with spiritual themes. We seldom find pieces such as the "Untitled" ceramic spheres and discs of the Jordanian Mahmoud Taha (b.1942), (fig. 161) in which writing in Tughra[460] form is employed as a decorative element. The Iranian Parviz Tanavoli (b.1937), a member of the Saqqah-khaneh Group, has made a series of sculpture in bronze entitled *Hich*, (fig. 162) meaning "nothing" in Farsi, which utilizes Nastaʿliq script for its pure aesthetic value.

Through the Pure Calligraphic style, the modern artist is able to manipulate, aesthetically and graphically, both the form without and the concept within the letter or word. Sometimes other elements are incorporated into the structure of the work, usually in the form of

[458]Interview with Ahmad Moustafa, London, 11/6/1991.
[459]Interview with Ahmad Moustafa, London, 11/6/1991.
[460]Tughra was the seal of Ottoman sultans and contains elaborate, intertwined script.

conventional Islamic decorative motifs, mostly copied from traditional miniatures and arabesque patterns. Yet, these visual shapes play a secondary role in the composition. By choosing religious subjects, the Islamic artist reverts to his cultural roots while utilizing the techniques of his time. One should not forget that many contemporary artists from the Islamic world have spent years learning at Western art schools, whether in their country or abroad. This training has been instrumental in making the artistic transition to modernity.

I: C. Calligraffiti.

The third branch of the Pure calligraphic style is **Calligraffiti**. It is an ordinary script that has no rules, belongs to no known school of calligraphy, and differs from one handwriting to the other. The inclusion of personal handwriting within a modern composition allows the artist a great deal of freedom in application and execution. I term it calligraffiti because, although the writing itself is inspired by calligraphy, it is also close to graffiti scribbling. In this style, the artist strips the letters of their classical restrictions and takes them to their very basic and rough shapes. All ties with tradition are severed in order to create a personalized image of the letter. In this branch, artistic creativity begins with an act of breaking down the original archetypal character before reshaping it into a personal symbol, free from the dictates of tradition. Because calligraffiti does not require proper training in classical calligraphy as a prerequisite, and because artists experience tremendous freedom in its practice, it has become the most popular calligraphic style among contemporary Islamic artists. The following are significant calligraffiti artists.

Etel Adnan (b.1925) is a poet, literary critic and painter. After studying literature at the Sorbonne and Harvard universities and establishing herself in the literary field, she discovered her inclination towards visual expression and took up visual art. She experimented with different media and the poet in her was always present in her calligraphic paintings, ceramics and tapestry. Most of her works are actually abstract illustrations of poems. She scribbles verses on painted backgrounds using accordion-like folios suggestive of oriental manuscripts. Painting, to Adnan, is a language without limit through which she expresses herself verbally and graphically. In her mixed media work on Japanese paper which opens in the shape of an accordion book (fig. 163), the name Allāh, written in black is repeated in vertical and horizontal uniformly spaced lines. Each word is painted over with a different colour in a haphazard manner. The methodical arrangement of the words, which are the only recognizable shapes in the composition, contrasts with the disorderly distribution of colour that covers them, thus creating an interesting blend of rhythm and ambiance in the composition.

A second calligraffiti artist is Ramzi Moustafa (b.1926), an Egyptian painter, ceramicist and sculptor. Moustafa began his art career in the 1940s before going to the Academia di Belle Arte in Bologna, Italy from which he graduated in 1955. He then continued his studies at the Royal College of Art in London (1956), after which he went to Paris to work independently for one year. In 1974, Moustafa received a Ph.D in philosophy from Denver University in the United States.[461] In the 1960s, he began to investigate an individual approach to art which drew on his Islamic heritage. In his paintings and sculptures, Ramzi Moustafa often repeats the name Allāh as a basic motif. One such example is his oil and acrylic on canvas where the

[461]Ramzi Moustafa file, Jordan National Gallery archive, Amman.

word Allāh is haphazardly written in white paint (fig. 164). The arrangement is outlined by coloured strokes and lines in a quite disorganized fashion. The graphic composition here enhances and emboldens the importance of the message in the painting.

A prominent calligraffiti artist is the Iraqi painter, art historian and theorist Shaker Hassan Al Said (b.1925). He graduated from the School of Fine Arts in Baghdad in 1954 where he was taught art history by Jawad Salim. After becoming acquainted with the works of Cezanne, Picasso, Braque and Klee, Shaker Hassan began to wonder why European artists used line in their paintings in contrast to the Arabs. Influenced by Jawad Salim's ideas, he did a series of paintings on subjects from *A Thousand and One Nights* which he later presented in a portfolio to the École des Beaux Arts in Paris. In 1955, Shaker Hassan was sent on a government scholarship to Paris where he spent his first year learning the language and taking classes at Académie Julian. The following year, he enrolled at the École des Arts Decoratifs. Shaker Hassan wanted to specialize in art history but the École refused his request. Upon contacting the Iraqi authorities, Shaker Hassan was told to transfer to the École des Beaux Arts. However, he was 43 years old and the Beaux Arts would not admit students above the age of 25. Instead he joined as a special student under Professor Legueult, who has thus far had the greatest influence on his art training. In 1959, Shaker Hassan returned to Baghdad and fell under the influence of the style of the 13th century Iraqi, al-Wasiti. He began to incorporate motifs such as a cock and a moon in his paintings, in an attempt to creatively answer his spiritual and visual needs. Finally, he found what he needed in Arabic calligraphy, which had thus far been used by Jawad Salim as a marginal element in painting. The year 1962 was critical for Shaker Hassan's spiritual, artistic and cultural

development. The political situation in Iraq was deteriorating with the infamous Mahdawi trials, which passed death sentences on any person who opposed the military regime. They were followed by the Shawaf revolt in Musil where thousands were massacred. The atmosphere in the country was extremely oppressive. It affected Shaker Hassan and threw him into a clinical depression. He went to several psychiatrists although none could help him. Having been interested in religious studies since 1958, he read the works of the mystic philosopher al-Hallaj during his self-imposed seclusion and was drawn to Sufism in which he found great spiritual relief. Within one week of his ṣūfī period, Shaker Hassan began to write profusely on art for the first time in his life and his career as an art theorist took off. Meanwhile, the spiritual element in his life affected his artistic expression. He subsequently gave up the depiction of all figures in his work and Arabic letters became the central subject of his compositions. By 1969, Shaker Hassan had developed the concept of what he termed "One-dimension".[462]

His theory of "One-dimension" is the result of Shaker Hassan's observations during the years he has spent in France and his native country. He observed that during the Age of Renaissance, Western artists adopted three-dimensions in their paintings, two of which were real (length and width) while the third (depth) was a visual illusion. This illusory dimension is the one that Shaker Hassan took on in his work calling it the one-dimension. Through it, he tackles the problem of colour, form and surface, by way of informal or accidental art.[463] For Shaker Hassan, a written character which is made up of a line with a single dimension plays an important role as a dimension within itself. It is a means that carries free

[462]Interview with Shaker Hassan, Amman, 19/ 5/1992.
[463]Interview with Shaker Hassan, Amman, 27/11/1991.

visual possibilities of form and mystic symbolism, rather than a linguistic end. He deconstructs writing, reduces the letter to its elementary form, and turns it into a ṣūfī[464] symbol in isolation from its outward meaning. He uses the Arabic letter as a starting point, and through its line discovers its plastic nature. The well-known Arab art and literary critic, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, has gone as far as defining Shaker's "One-dimension" as the link between man and God in infinity.[465] For Shaker Hassan, it is as an amalgamation of the spiritual and graphic qualities of the Arabic letter. As long as writing is achieved by drawing a line, which is the dividing element between two surfaces and two levels, it should have a single dimension. This is the element that Shaker Hassan employs in his works.

In 1971, he formed a group of artists who use writing in their work. They were the painters Jamil Hamoudi, Madiha Omar, Rafa al-Nasiri, Dia Azzawi, Nouri Rawi, Hashim Samarji, the sculptor Muhammad Ghani, the ceramicist Saad Shaker, and the renowned calligrapher Hashim al-Baghdadi. The group held its first and only exhibition in Baghdad that same year. They accompanied it with a catalogue in which Shaker Hassan explained his theory based on the usage of the Arabic letter. Not all the artists of the "One-dimension" group followed the same style as Shaker Hassan, for this was never a school of art in the literal sense. However, all use the Arabic letter as a base for their compositions, applying it as a plastic shape as well as an intellectual symbol.

Shaker Hassan refutes Western abstraction as a negative force. He replaces it with what he calls the contemplative vision of the "One-dimension" as a positive force that unifies man with his universe through his

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[464]The adjective ṣūfī is a term Shaker Hassan insisted on using to describe his work.
[465]J.I.Jabra, Celebration of Life, p.172.

humanity. In his philosophy, man's ego is a negative force in the positiveness of the world. For him, the real nature of things can only be associated with those feelings stemming from man's subconscious and inner being. The empty canvas represents the 'ego' and the letters of the alphabet represent the positive force. Consequently, using individual words and letters of the alphabet as an art configuration is a version of the contemplative vision that tries to sense the unity of our two worlds: the world of thought through language and the plastic world of observation. Shaker Hassan has been inspired by scribbling on old abandoned walls impregnated with the marks of time. He considers the cracks on these walls to be continuous vague writings in a painting developed by a sequence of accidents within the environment. A good example is his oil on wood and canvas painting *The Wall* (fig. 165), where the artist's job is to introduce the accidental work to the viewer. He interprets it by adding his own scribbling of ambiguous letters, words, numbers and signs, to the illegible and uninterrupted 'writings' of the cracks in an effort to introduce a new form of technical expression.[466] The overall picture, in itself, expresses a state of consciousness close to a state of ecstasy. Shaker Hassan considers spontaneity an essential component of his contemplative vision. Therefore, a child's scribbling and an adult's graffiti, in their modesty and naïvité, express the instinctive nature of the human soul, in its conscious and subconscious manifestations. For him, the One-dimension joins man to God in infinity through the most common and humble lines. Furthermore, the act of the artist's hand in touching the paper is equivalent to the act of fanā' al-dhāt, which, in the language of mystics, means "lost in contemplation of God, and insensible to all else."[467] He rejects the use of

[466]Interview with Shaker Hassan Al Said, Amman, 27/11/1991.
[467]E.W.Lane Arabic English Lexicon Vol.II, p.2452.

traditional scripts in classical calligraphy as regressive and confined to a time in the past. He prefers graffiti as more indicative of the present. Sometimes he replaces a letter with its numerical equivalent according to the science of al-jafr, the numerical symbolism of letters.[468] In his painting *Subjective Contemplations*, (fig. 166) in which he has used anti-collage or the tearing off of parts of the painting's canvas to show the wood behind it, the number 8 appears next to the letter bā ـبـ. According to jafr, the letter hā ـهـ is equivalent to the number 8. Therefore, by replacing one letter with its numerical equivalent, Shaker Hassan writes the word hub, meaning love, in an enigmatic, mystical language. In his painting *Muhammad* (fig. 167), talismanic signs and folk motifs crowd the space between the cracks in an attempt to relay a mystical message. In another painting, also entitled *Subjective Contemplation* (fig. 168), instead of symbolic signs and numbers, Shaker Hassan writes the word Allāh, half erased on an old wall surrounded by vague letter shapes that intrigue the viewer and make him wonder about the significance of the work. Despite the highly abstract quality of his letters, Shaker Hassan believes they continue to emanate signs which carry certain ṣūfī messages for him.

Shaker Hassan is a painter who has embarked on a mystical voyage through a contemporary form of art. His aim is to incorporate the spiritual and the temporal, with the former overpowering the latter.

I: D. Freeform Calligraphy.

The fourth branch of the Pure Calligraphy style is **Freeform Calligraphy**, a script that balances classical calligraphy and calligraffiti. It is the studied modern script that several artists have developed and differs from

[468]Interview with Shaker Hassan Al Said, Amman, 27/11/1991.

traditional scripts by having no fixed rules. However, freeform styles are more regulated than graffiti and have a certain aesthetic appeal.

A prominent painter of Freeform calligraphy is the Libyan artist Ali Omar Ermes (b.1945), who was given a scholarship to the Plymouth School of Architecture and Design from which he graduated in 1970. Upon his return to Libya, he took up photography and began writing and working in the visual arts section of the magazine *All Arts*. Ermes went back to London in 1974 as the visual arts consultant to the director of the World of Islam Festival that took place in 1976, during which he participated in arranging exhibitions on Islamic culture and classical art. This offered him the opportunity to travel throughout the Islamic world and meet artists and calligraphers who would participate in the Festival. In 1975, Ermes returned to Libya and worked from there in publishing and art, travelling frequently. In 1981, he finally moved with his family and settled in London.[469]

Most of Ermes's paintings are done in ink on paper. Occasionally, he uses acrylics and recently he has been experimenting with oil on canvas. His compositions fall into two groups which always revolve around calligraphy. The first group consists either of an Arabic letter as a central focal point, or a word executed in a thick brush stroke against a plain or coloured background. At times, he writes poems and quotations around his central letter to create an interesting visual balance in the composition. In some works, Ermes's script is close to Maghribī, in others to Dīwānī. However, the freedom in the flow of the brush that paints the calligraphic signs is far removed from the restricted discipline of a calligrapher which makes them closer to a personal script (fig. 169). The second group of Ermes's paintings is made up of either

[469]V. Porter, "A Life of Painting", Ali Omar Ermes Art and Ideas, a catalogue of the artist's exhibition at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (1992), p.11.

a repetition of a single or different letters. They fill the entire space of the painting with colours and abstract shapes that create visual images reminiscent of the marbled paper, ebru, of later Islamic book illumination. The texts in these compositions look more like a part of graphic design than legible script (fig. 170). Ermes never uses Qur'ānic or religious quotations. A poet himself, he employs the profane literature of the pre-Islamic Jahilīya and early Islamic poets in his paintings. In others, they are simple explanations of the letters themselves.[470]

Ermes has found in Arabic calligraphy a graphic and literary language by which he identifies with his culture and beliefs. He is a devout Muslim, who expresses his piety by shunning religious texts so as not to abuse them and uses calligraphic forms written in a Freeform script. He regards his abstract work as having four-dimensions: a visual dimension, a historical dimension, a literary dimension and an artistic dimension. For him, a work of art is judged successful only when it communicates with the viewer. The mental process between the painting and the beholder is as important as the motion of the composition. Ermes considers the use of Arabic text in his paintings as a bonus for those who can comprehend it; for those who cannot, it is an invitation to explore further and attempt to learn more about them. Ermes's quest is to continue working within the mainstream of international art and to contribute to it by adding new elements which are available in Islamic culture, without compromising his own Islamic cultural traditions.[471] Judging by Ermes's success in the West, it seems that he is one of the few Islamic artists who has succeeded in propagating his culture in a modern way, without betraying its origins or becoming xenophobic.

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[470]Ibid, p.27.
[471]Ibid, p.30-3.

II. Abstract Calligraphy.

The second style of the Calligraphic School is **Abstract Calligraphy** which abstracts both form as well as meaning. A short reference to the definition of abstraction is necessary: "The twentieth century concept of abstract art is of an art devoid of figurative images which does not seek to represent other visual experiences: it commands its own autonomous terms of reference."[472] Abstract Calligraphy fits within this definition comfortably whereby the artist manipulates the visual aesthetic aspect of the Arabic letter as a structural element in the composition. The abstract quality in Arabic characters serves the artist in an unrestricted manner and on his own terms. He builds up his abstract work without having to refer to a recognized school of art or to follow any set rules. There are two branches of Abstract Calligraphy: Legible Script and Pseudo-script.

II: A. Legible Script.

The first branch of abstract calligraphy is **Legible script**, in which the artist maintains the outward form of the letter or letters and employs them in a pure, visual, graphic sense, without taking meaning or connotation into account.

Although Arabic writing always carries some significance, it becomes an abstract set of symbols when the letters lose their meaning. Yet they only lose their meaningful qualities when they cease to be legible, through the distortion of their forms. Nevertheless, I include works of art with legible letters under this style because the artists themselves have meant their works to be abstract. They have employed their letters in their original

[472]Phaidon Dictionary of 20th Century Art, p.1.

shapes which, according to them, become abstract as long as no meaningful word is formed. One such artist is the Syrian Mahmoud Hammad (1923-1988).

Hammad began his career as a member of the Republican Guard before giving in to his talent and becoming an art teacher. He was sent on scholarship to the Academia di Belle Arte in Rome (1953-1957) where he was influenced by European academic figurative art which he followed at the beginning of his artistic career. Most of his themes, such as the Syrian-Egyptian Union in 1958, were political. In 1963, Hammad was appointed instructor at the College of Fine Arts in Damascus, later becoming its Dean. Since 1966, his exploration into the plasticity of Arabic calligraphy has led him towards abstraction.[473] He was one of the first Syrian abstract artists to link his style to his local environment by using Arabic letters. Hammad was responsible for establishing the calligraphic school of painting in Syria. He took letters and transformed them into the main component of his compositions. He neglected their legible significance and utilized their plasticity of shape. In his monochrome formations, Hammad was more concerned with the placement of the abstract calligraphic shapes and their visual and constructional effect within the space of the composition than with their meanings. In his painting *Calligraphy*, (fig. 171) the shapes of certain letters, such as dāl, wāw and hā are quite distinct, though they serve no purpose other than being the principal components of the abstract composition. On the other hand, the viewer might be able to form a word out of them, which enhances the enigmatic nature and potential of the letters.

[473] A.Bahnassi, Ruwwād al-fann al-ḥadīth fī'l-bilād al-ʿarabīyah, pp.75-6.

II: B. Pseudo-script.

The second type of Abstract calligraphy is **Pseudo-script** which consists of unrecognizable forms based on Arabic characters. Several Islamic artists have succeeded in exploiting the original shape of the letter as an integral component of the whole composition while denuding it of its legibility. They have come up with a pseudo-script in configurations obscurely related to the Arabic alphabet. At times these shapes are clearly recognized, while at others, their relationship to legible signs is quite difficult to determine, although the overall effect is unmistakable. In Pseudo-script, the artist usually transforms the letters into unrecognizable lines and dots which are their primary format, thus sapping them of their linguistic significance. He only leaves visual plastic characters to incorporate within the composition. The letters and words in this style cannot be deciphered or read and do not need a literate viewer to appreciate them aesthetically. Consequently, Pseudo-script does not carry a message within its letters, so this calligraphic form becomes a silent constructional pattern similar to the arabesque.

An artist who has treated calligraphy in this purely abstract manner is the Tunisian Nja Mahdaoui (b.1937). Mahdaoui received his art training in the Free Atelier in Carthage. He studied modern art history at Dante Allighieri Academy in Tunis and graphic art at the Academia Santa Andrea in Rome. He passed through different periods of figurative art, including Surrealism, and worked with collage before establishing his calligraphic style, through which he was able to come to terms with his own artistic identity. Mahdaoui takes up Kufic characters and literally plays with them to turn them into graphic signs, utilizing their elasticity and plasticity to the

maximum. In his misleading compositions which are entirely built on signs, one might think at first glance, that they contain a legible text because the shapes of the letters seem familiar. Yet any attempt at reading the text becomes futile. Although some of the letters are discernible, they serve no purpose other than the structural (fig. 172). At times they look more like Chinese characters than Arabic (figs. 173), though there is no doubt about their origin. Mahdaoui utilizes various traditional and modern media in his work. He uses ink on parchment and animal skins as well as oils, acrylics, water-colours, gouache, graphics, canvas, polyester, wool and brass, to create his paintings, etchings, tapestry and murals (figs. 174, 175). It is the fluidity inherent in the art of calligraphy, which traditional master calligraphers have manipulated to develop diverse scripts, that Mahdaoui exploits in a controlled manner, to meticulously build up his abstract compositions.

From the number of artists who adhere to Abstract Calligraphy, it can be assumed that it is the most popular among all the calligraphic styles. Artists have found in it the freedom of a modern trend as well as a reference to their cultural heritage.

A number of artists have totally denuded epigraphy of its recognizable shapes and turned the characters into abstract configurations. Another example of a pseudo-calligraphic artist is Khaled Khreis (b.1956), from Jordan. Khreis was sent on a government scholarship to Hulwan University in Cairo (1973-78) after which he went to Spain. In Barcelona, he attended the Escuela de Bellas Artes to further train in painting, while at the same time studying sculpture at the Escuela de Artes Aplicadas y Artisticos Oficios (School of Applied Arts). In 1979, Khreis enrolled at the Escuela Internacional Pintura Mural, San Cugat, to train in mural painting. After leaving Barcelona, he travelled through Italy and took courses in sculpture,

graphics and visual art education at the Academia di Belle Arte, Pietro Banuchi in Perugia (1979-81). However, Khreis's quest for art training was not yet satisfied. In 1981, he went to New York to get first-hand experience of the latest modern art movements. Khreis then moved to Mexico and joined the Escuela de Bellas Artes, San Miguel de Allende, doing research in etching while preparing his thesis for the Escuela de Bellas Artes in Barcelona, from which he graduated in 1982. After teaching art at the Institute of Fine Arts in Amman (1983-1989), Khreis returned to Barcelona to continue his studies in lithography at the Escuela de Artes del Libro and prepare for his Ph.D at the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Barcelona.[474]

A well-read and well-trained artist, Khreis has always been searching for new elements in his paintings. Throughout his travels and studies in the West, Khreis wondered about the issue of identity, whether he was an Eastern or a Western artist. As a consequence, in 1979 he became attracted to his cultural background and began experimenting with Arabic calligraphy. He found in it not only a solution that mustered indigenous forms in a modern aesthetics, but it also suited his linear tendency in painting and etching. By then he had reached a stage where he had lost interest in three-dimensional figurations and was more attracted to work on flat, two-dimensional surfaces in which Arabic letters fitted well.

During this same period he became acquainted with the works of Matisse and Klee. In the former, he found the simplification of form and colour, while in the latter's work, he appreciated the relationship between line and letter. In Barcelona, Khreis came across the works of Tapies who was inspired by old walls and the effect of lines and cracks on them. Tapies gave

[474]Interview with Khalid Khreis, Amman, 9/4/1992.

Khreis the incentive to use new materials such as wood, discarded cardboard sheets, metal pieces, marble powder mixed with glue, and collage. Khreis was also influenced by other Spanish artists such as Argimond and Antonio Clavée Saura who had also worked with unconventional materials.

Meanwhile, he also began to study the works of other Arab artists who had worked with calligraphy. To find a personal artistic language Khreis used newspaper collage and began economizing on colour by using natural pigments of ochre, yellow and earth tones. This experience took him back to his own village in southern Jordan where people covered the outside walls of their houses with a textured layer of mud. The colour pigments led him to work in mixed media such as inks, water-colours and acrylics. Between 1983 and 1985, Khreis passed through a critical period in his artistic development. He experimented with a new technique by rubbing water-colours and inks into the cardboard and scratching lines instead of drawing them. In 1990, Khreis's exploration in the graphic aspects of letter forms intensified. He was not interested in classical calligraphy because he felt that the employment of traditional script would be repetitive. He believed that the only possible innovation was to reorganize them in a new composition, so he reverted to abstracting the characters.

In his paintings, Khreis used the letter to indicate a direction such as north/south and vertical/horizontal. The rhythmic movement in the characters themselves such as sīn س and wāw و recalled for him Qur'ānic recital, tajwīd, where one reads for a few moments then stops before continuing again. The letters in his work signified the music of tajwīd while the space equalled the silence. He tackled the whole surface in his paintings as when writing from right to left (fig. 176). Sometimes he kept the letter unfinished, insinuating a word, while leaving the viewer to complete it in his

mind, inspired by the hues, tones and architecture of the composition (fig. 177). As exercises in spontaneity, Khreis began to splash colours on the painting's surface and intercept them with calligraphic signs in which he saw, besides the literal, linguistic value, a humanitarian and cultural dimension as well as compositional and aesthetic elements. At times, Khreis painted and wrote with his left hand to rid his work of any controlled effect. He felt that the movement of Arabic writing, from the right to the left, paralleled the movement from the external to the internal or the mind to the heart, which he experienced when working on small pieces that he cradled in his arm. However, not all letters were abstract for Khreis in some he saw a human figure, a bird, a tree or an insect (fig. 178).

Khreis's painting are as cerebral as they are visual. The blues and ochres in his work come spontaneously from the sky and the desert of his country, and the integration of the two with the horizon. The shape of an arch is impulsively repeated in his abstractions (fig. 179). He sees in it the mihrab through which a Muslim reaches a metaphysical state, or the window for hope. The relationship between darkness, light and colour represents the spiritual side in man, while line embodied in the letter stands for the emotions. Numbers are extensions of letters: 3 ٣ is an extension of sīn س and 5 ٥ of tā ة. Khreis never ceases analyzing his work intellectually as well as aesthetically. He works in a state of expressive emotionalism, painting without any preliminary sketches or pre-conceived ideas.[475] Instead, Khreis prepares himself emotionally and allows accidental, unconstrained movements and spontaneity to determine the final result in his art. In spite of the role chance plays in the creative process of Khalid Khreis, his abstraction is not the work of an artist who paints randomly. It is a

[475]Interview with Khalid Khreis, Amman, 9/4/1992.

controlled, sensitive expressiveness in which the artist's emotions and intellect equally determine the visual end result. Every mysterious, enigmatic symbol, including those of Arabic letters, are the outcome of a cerebral process that goes into their transformation (fig. 180).

The Iraqi artist Rafa al-Nasiri (b.1940) has included abstract calligraphy in his work both in its legible and conjectural forms. Al-Nasiri graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Baghdad in 1959 and decided to go not to the West but to China - where he spent 4 years between 1959 and 1963 training at the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Peking. He first discovered the value of Arabic letters in 1967/8 when he was in Portugal on a grant from the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon. This period was his turning point from figurative art to abstraction. Visually, the letter became the most important motif in his work. Behind this transition lies the search for an artistic identity different from what was then prevalent in European art, particularly artistic trends that al-Nasiri found in Portugal. This transition was also motivated by his discovery of a new medium in painting, acrylic. With this discovery, al-Nasiri returned to the paint brush while also working in wood block printing and in graphics. In contrast to the techniques of etching and wood carving, acrylic forced al-Nasiri to practice certain movements with his wrist, which recalled the Chinese brush technique he had learnt during his earlier training.

The first Arabic letters which al-Nasiri used in his paintings were sīn س ,hā هـ and mīm م. Their flowing cursive movements, executed in free-form, paralleled the movements of Chinese calligraphy (fig. 181). Al-Nasiri continued to use the three letter forms in print-making until the mid-1970s. In 1976/7, nature, which hitherto had been overpowered by

his free-form alphabet patterns, began to appear in his paintings, while the letters began to dissolve and become part of the background details. Al-Nasiri began to divide his compositions into two spaces: earth and sky, separated by a horizon. At this stage of his artistic development, nature began to occupy a more central position in his compositions, and new visions of the desert and his environment were revealed through his emphasis on the horizon line. A depth appears in his untitled gouache on paper (figs. 182), which makes it more of a landscape than a flat composition. In these images, the foreground consists of a large calligraphic mass which contains smaller illegible signs. For al-Nasiri, this new approach carried Oriental spiritual meanings which were related to Chinese mysticism and had a poetic approach that differed from Shaker Hassan's sufism. The letter, in its symbolic significance, became an iconographic factor that defined the spirit of the work. In later works, the letters began to disappear and were replaced by the diacritical marks that accompany Arabic script; they were meant to signify the letter itself. In 1989, al-Nasiri went back to China, renewing his ties with Chinese art. Once again, he began to employ Arabic characters as an integral component in the composition. At the outset of the Gulf crisis on August 1st, 1990, al-Nasiri's mood changed to pure abstraction in which he vaguely identified the letters by dots and obscure signs (fig. 183). After the Gulf war he moved to Jordan, and Arabic characters once more found their way back into his work, regaining their previous importance in the composition (fig. 184).[476]

Since 1967, the Arabic letter, in both its pseudo and legible forms, has been a spiritual connection between Rafa al-Nasiri and his work, and a device by which he defends and proves himself. He identifies with it, orally

[476]Interview with Rafa al-Nasiri, Amman, 7/11/ 1991.

and visually because of its relationship to both his past cultural history and present reality.[477] Rafa al-Nasiri is a good representative of the Abstract Calligraphic style, in both its branches, the Legible Script and Pseudo-script. He is an artist who has manipulated abstract epigraphy in the full sense. He has thoroughly researched the relationship between the letter and the compositional space, while striking a delicate balance without having one distract from the other. Throughout his artistic development, al-Nasiri has successfully worked with Arabic characters, both in their recognizable and abstract forms, as overt and symbolic representations, and as central and peripheral motifs in his composition, with minimal distortion. Relevant examples are his acrylic on canvas painting, *Qasr al-Ashiq - the Prince* (fig. 185) in which a pseudo calligraphy clearly related to the Arabic alphabet form the median point in the overall construction.

III. Calligraphic Combinations.

The third main style of the calligraphic school of art is to be defined as **Calligraphic Combinations** which mix calligraphy with other components to create a work of art. In this case, Arabic script forms part of the composition, while the rest is made up of either pictorial and figurative shapes or expressive symbols. Calligraphic Combinations differ from the Neo-classical branch of Pure Calligraphy which includes decorative elements in the composition. The former is free of conventional rules and styles while the latter always abides by traditional script types and configurations. Calligraphic Combination works use letters, words and sentences as part of an overall composition that basically relies on realistic or abstract patterns and symbolic motifs. Sometimes the letters themselves become the symbols

[477]Interview with Rafa al-Nasiri, Amman, 7/11/1991.

and constitute a significant portion of the overall composition, regardless of their diminutive size. The inclusion of a single word within the composition can carry a message which makes it the defining factor of the subject. As an example, the writing in an ink on paper cityscape entitled *Jerusalem,* (fig. 186) by the Palestinian artist Burhan Karkutli (b.1932), barely takes up one-tenth of the composition. However, to the literate viewer it defines the subject, "Jerusalem is ours, Victory is ours" and puts everything around it into perspective. To the linguistically illiterate viewer the message is lost, although the writing conveys a point of attraction by the simplicity of its design in contrast to the cluttered figures around it. Although most subjects of the Calligraphic Combination style are of a secular nature, it does not necessarily imply that works of religious orientation are not found among this group. There are two branches of the Calligraphic Combination style: Central Calligraphy and Marginal Calligraphy.

III: A. Central Calligraphy.

The first branch is **Central Calligraphy** which incorporates calligraphy as a significant component in a composition which it shares with other shapes and motifs. The importance of the subject is accentuated by the inclusion of a word or words, regardless of the area they occupy or their position. It could be a small word or a whole paragraph in the foreground or the background, clearly explaining the message in the art work. An example of this is the mixed media painting of Vladimir Tamari (Palestine, b.1942) which contains only one main word al-Quds (Jerusalem) (fig. 187). However, its graphics and position make it an overpowering component of the composition.

The etching entitled *Tell al-Zaʿtar,* by Rachid Koraichi (b.1947) from Algeria, refers to the massacre of Palestinians during the Lebanese civil war. Barely legible writings forms the background of the work, and is super-imposed by distorted figures and the clear words tell al-zaʿtar (fig. 188).

Rafik Lahham (b.1932) a Jordanian, has written the Basmalah in Kufic script at the top of a stylized view of the Dome of the Rock to emphasize Jerusalem's holiness, in his oil on canvas landscape, *From my Country* (fig. 189).

Majdoub Rabbah (b.1933) a Sudanese, developed a 'solar engraving technique' originally used by traditional artists in decorating calabashes and gourds. He mixes African religious symbols with Arabic calligraphy. Rabbah's burnt wood *Allāhu Akbar* and *God Multiplies* (figs. 190, 191), consist mostly of African tribal decorations; he adds no more than two words to each work which adequately define the subject.

III: B. Marginal Calligraphy.

The second branch of Calligraphic Combinations is **Marginal Calligraphy**. Regardless of the space it occupies, in this branch, writing plays a small role in the overall composition and is, at times, executed after a well-known art style such as Expressionism, Cubism, Abstraction etc. In some works, writing is part of the decorative element in the foreground as we see it beneath the sea wave motif in the *Untitled* (fig. 192) enamel on wood painting by the Moroccan Mohamed Melihi (b.1936). In other paintings such as Wajih Nahle's early *Picture Box* (fig. 193), calligraphy dissolves among folk designs.

In some works, writing, whether clear or obscure, is no more than part of the background of the main content, although it might occupy a sizable

part of the composition. Its purpose is to provide a setting for the main characters and figures rather than the theme, as in the Central Calligraphic branch. Among such works are the *Untitled* etching by the Egyptian artist Kamal Amin Awad (1923-1980), *The Lover's Tree* by Jordan's Muna Saudi (b.1945), and Aziz Amoura's political ink drawings *Echoes from Sabra and Shatila,* where detailed writing in the background, sets out the principal figures in the foreground by providing a contrast in size and shape. In Ali Jabri's (Jordanian b.1943) diptych of mixed media on paper, *Ibn Ṭulūn's Mosque*, calligraphy is part of the architectural decoration, while in Rakan Dabdoub's (Iraq, b.1940) *A Woman's Thought,* it is a vague pattern blending with other figures. In Omar Abdallah Khairy's (Sudanese, b.1939) china ink on wood *Nativity*, the writing is barely visible in the crowded composition. (figs. 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199).

Not all those who use Calligraphic Combinations are pure calligraphic artists. Some sporadically include calligraphy in their compositions, either to clarify the subject or as a decorative element, but they do not use it as the major means and motif in their paintings. To that extent these artists should not be regarded as part of the Calligraphic Style.

The Iraqi painter Dia Azzawi (b.1939) is an example of a calligraphic artist who has used both branches of Calligraphic Combinations in his works. Azzawi is one of the outstanding Iraqi artists of the 1960s who studied archaeology at the Faculty of Arts at Baghdad University, graduating in 1962. Meanwhile, he took art lessons with Hafid Drubi at the College Atelier while attending evening classes at the Institute of Fine Arts. In 1976, Azzawi was appointed art consultant at the Iraqi Cultural Centre in London.

By arranging exhibitions for Arab and Iraqi artists at the Centre, he was able to introduce Arab art to the British public.

Through the influence of Jawad Salim and his training in archaeology, Azzawi's work is dominated by folk motifs, arabesque patterns, and Assyrian and Babylonian figures with stone-like shapes and features. Since the late 1960s, Azzawi has added Arabic calligraphy to his artistic vocabulary which he uses expressively. Most of Azzawi's works fall under the category of Calligraphic Combinations. Poetry is the overpowering influence in these compositions in which Azzawi sees a continuity of illustrated poems from classical Islamic miniatures. His etching series on the pre-Islamic poems *Al-Mu'allaqat,* in the Central Calligraphic style, the entire composition is made up of shapes and verses in different arrangements that pertain to the pre-Islamic jahiliya poets each represents. Although the poems themselves may not be easily deciphered, the names of the poets denoted are clear (fig. 200).

An example of his Marginal Calligraphic work is his etching from the series, *The Thousand and One Nights*, (fig. 201) in which he fills the background with random letters, overpowered by gigantic figures, evocative of Iraq's antiquity. Similar in concept to the latter is his gouache on paper, *What al-Nīfārī Said to ʿAbdullāh* (fig. 202) where calligraphic signs constitute the sole decorative element in the figurative composition. Rarely does Azzawi create a work of Pure Calligraphy. A prolific painter, skilled colourist and graphic designer, his works vary between miniature size and large murals. Almost all of Azzawi's calligraphic compositions either include arabesque patterns, folk and religious symbols, abstract shapes, or heavily sculpted figures from Iraq's historical past. Whichever source he draws from, Dia Azzawi's compositions display a distinct harmony among the various shapes and strong colours.

Many Arab and Islamic artists move freely between different calligraphic styles and branches of the same style. An example of such versatility is Issam El-Said.

The Iraqi artist Issam El-Said (1939-1988), was a rare talent who succeeded in proving himself in the West. He was the grandson of the late Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri El-Said. He lost both his grandfather and father during the 1958 Revolution in Iraq and settled in London. He was a prolific artist, designer, art historian, architect and expert on Islamic art, and he read architecture at Corpus Christi College at Cambridge (1958-61) before going to Hammersmith College of Art and Design (1962-64). El-Said worked in graphics, oils, enamel on aluminium and paleocrystal (a transparent material of cold cast polyester resin which he developed through long research and experiments). Despite his self imposed-exile in England, he always felt an attraction towards his native country which appeared in his stylized drawings and etchings of Baghdadi scenes, recording local customs and ceremonies. His profound knowledge of Islamic design gained him the commission to design the interior of the London Central Mosque and Islamic Cultural Centre (1976-77), as well as the Aloussi Mosque (1982-88) and the al-Aboud Mosque (1984), both in Baghdad. He was a consultant for the master plans by two foreign firms who designed King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah (1977-78), and Imam Muhammad ibn Sa'ud Islamic University in Riyadh (1978-79). Besides painting and etching, El-Said designed carpets and furniture, as well as architectural exteriors and interiors. He was well known for his research on theories of Islamic design and architecture based on scientific equations that he published in a book entitled *Geometric Concepts in Islamic Art*. El-Said was a member of "Christies' Contemporary Artists"

group which established his reputation as a painter in London. Since 1981 and until he died, he was engaged in research in Islamic art for his Ph.D at University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.[478] His untimely death deprived the Arab art movement of one of its most cultured and intellectual artists.

El-Said began incorporating sentences and words into his work in the early 1960s. It was probably his self-imposed exile and the subsequent nostalgia for his homeland which made him draw on traditions from Iraqi folklore and popular songs and quotations. He continued to use calligraphy in his work until his death.

El-Said's paintings contained Abstract Calligraphy, Calligraffiti and Freeform Calligraphy as well as Calligraphic Combinations. His early painting *Farewell* (1961) (fig. 203) display the free-form script which makes up the whole composition in subdued colours. In *Qur'ānic Verse* (1964) (fig. 204) the abstract calligraphy in bright reds and black, sharply contrasts with the blue and violet background, leaving an impression of mysterious figures floating in space. His early abstract work, *Once Upon a Time* (1963) (fig. 205), is impregnated with folk motifs and calligraphic signs.

Although El-Said was not a practising Muslim until the early 1980s, he was always attracted to the Qur'ān by the mental imagery contained in its verses. Its rich language, enigmatic letters and superlative adjectives affected his artistic sensitivities into transforming them into tactile colours and shapes. The only means by which he could do so was calligraphy. In his paintings *Qur'ānic Verse* (1980) (fig. 206), Freeform Calligraphy and Calligraffiti are used to delineate the meaning of the religious text within a sombre and meditative atmosphere.

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[478]Issam El-Said: Artist and Scholar, p.13.

However, not all of El-Said's works were of a contemplative nature. Although he had a sense of drama he was also inclined towards the frivolous. This is apparent in his Marginal Calligraphic Combinations *The Musicians* (1979) and *Once I Had a Bulbul* (1967) (figs. 207, 208). The two works depict the lighter side of life which the artist enjoyed. In these paintings, he recalled the old Baghdadi musical traditions and children's songs that he remembered from his childhood years. Hence, the two compositions are filled with traditional decorations and vibrant colours.

In 1975, El-Said began to include Neo-classical calligraphy in his Pure Calligraphic works. His preference was for geometric Kufic, in which he saw endless graphic and compositional possibilities. He began with his simple design of the word *Allāh* (1975) (fig. 209), in which the formation of Kufic letters in a geometric shape was the sole component in the composition. This became the foundation from which he developed his complicated formations. His *Geometric Multiples* (fig. 210) in enamelled aluminum, made up of 16 identical magnetic squares, is one such example. Each square had the same calligraphic and geometric design and could be arranged in endless combinations so the whole composition constantly changed, remaining ever animated. Besides being one of the first Iraqi graphic artists, El-Said introduced a new technique to Arab graphic art by engraving a pattern on several zinc plates and utilizing them in reorganizing various configurations and combinations, as seen in his geometric etching (fig. 211). During this period, El-Said used other traditional scripts in his paintings, such as the Thuluth in his painting, *From the Qur'ān* (1978) (fig. 212), in which he tried to give the effect of classical writing on old parchment. However, El-Said continued to work in Freeform Calligraphy, Calligraffiti and Calligraphic Combinations as can be seen in his, *Qur'ānic*

Verse (1986), and *Bird in a Golden Cage* (1988) (figs. 213, 214). The potency of calligraphy had so great an effect on El-Said that works devoid of it, such as his etching *Five Women* (1978) (fig. 215), betray the clear influence of continuous flowing lines found in the Arabic script Musalsal.

From this review of El-Said's works, it appears that this agile and prolific artist chose the calligraphic school as the main course for his work while moving freely between its main and secondary styles and deftly manipulating diverse media. Although it is important to define the various calligraphic styles, however, it is unimportant to categorize an artist under a particular division or a subdivision. All that matters for the present purpose is that he or she belongs to the calligraphic school.

Unconscious Calligraphy

The mother tongue of Arab artists, the Arabic language, and the characters of Arabic script, are also the means by which other non-Arab Islamic artists write their languages. It therefore exerts a powerful psychological attraction for them. Furthermore, the Divine revelation, enshrined in the Qur'an and revealed through the Prophet Muhammad in Arabic, confers a holiness on the language. Consequently, many works by non-calligraphic, contemporary Islamic artists, contain unconscious calligraphic forms that appear disguised in human, animal and abstract shapes. Meanwhile, in its incessant practical application in everyday life, Arabic is also a vehicle for mundane purposes. Because of its ties with religion and its continuous daily use, many artists cannot but be affected by the configurations of the Arabic alphabet. Examples of what I term the unconscious use of calligraphic patterns are the following: the women in Salah Taher's (Egyptian, b.1911) oil on paper *Untitled* painting (fig. 216),

where the flow of lines seems like those of the letter alif; the dancers in Mouazzaz Rawdah's (Lebanese, b.1906) marble sculpture *Dabke* (fig. 217) which looks like repetitive alphabetical characters; the lines in Ali Fendi's (Tunisian, b.1946) *Joy of Colour* (fig. 218) could be abstract letters; Lotfi Larnaout's (Tunisian, b.1944) *Form and Colour* (fig. 219) can easily pass as abstract calligraphy and Muna Saudi's (Jordanian, b.1945) *Untitled* granite sculpture (fig. 220) looks like a modern formation of the word Allāh, although she never intended to include calligraphy in it. However, none of these artists can legitimately be termed as calligraphic, because none has intentionally meant to use calligraphy in his or her work, either as an inherent or as a marginal component. In Islam, the act is judged by the intention (nīyya) of the doer, so accidents cannot qualify as acts. Therefore, accidental calligraphic forms that appear in the works of Islamic artists do not identify their creators as calligraphic artists. And yet growing up in a country impregnated with traditional Islamic art forms, however, leaves its imprint on contemporary Islamic artists and this subconsciously surfaces in their artistic output.

Chapter 18

Conclusion.

Westernization is a state of mind. It takes place only when the recipient is psychologically ready to cross his cultural boundaries, abandon his own traditions, and adopt those of the West. It differs from the process of cross-cultural fertilization by making a total shift from one's own theoretical and cultural framework. However, Westernization does not occur in a vacuum and requires an appropriate social and political climate. The decline of traditional Islamic art, however, does not relate to the extension of Western culture into the Islamic world which dates back to the Crusades of the 10th and 11th centuries. On the contrary, a strong civilization can only be recipient to positive influences which should enhance its own modes and traditions. Although Muslims had earlier responded to the influences coming from Greece, Iran, India and China, they did not make a complete cultural switch as they did in the 20th century but adapted the newly acquired trends to their own aesthetics.

Since the turn of the century, Western art forms and aesthetics have replaced the traditional Islamic arts throughout the world of Islam. Islamic artists of the 20th century have embarked on a new experience, inducing a change in their creative expressions and general taste. For them, to be introduced to academic training was in itself a revolutionary step. Paradoxically, Western aesthetics were one of the new cultural points of identity that the Islamic world whole heartedly embraced. Although at the beginning artists approached three-dimensional easel painting with

apprehension, it soon became the main mode of visual expression. Their training, whether abroad or in their countries' art institutions, gave them the basis from which they could break new ground and develop their own contemporary aesthetic by combining their Western training with their cultural heritage in a contemporaneous manner. Through Western-style painting, Islamic artists tried to form their own artistic identity either by depicting local subject-matter in their art work, or by borrowing various signs and motifs from their past cultural heritage and linked them to the present through well-known Western techniques and schools of art. However, their search went on and after five decades of following contemporary international styles in painting and sculpture, modern Islamic artists succeeded in developing through the Calligraphic school of art, an aesthetic with which they can identify. Their Western-oriented training, with their Islamic cultural background, have served them well in finding an artistic identity which they have manipulated to the fullest, in order to evolve a new cultural personality.

The majority of Islamic scholars and traditionalists among whom are Prof. Dr. Nasser al-Din al-Assad,[479] Jamal Badran,[480] Prof. Dr. Ekmeluddin Ihsanoglu,[481] and Muamer Ülker[482] are a few of many who believe that any continuity of classical Islamic art, through a contemporary form of plastic art, is impossible and downright outrageous, if not blasphemous. In their opinion, the only continuity they perceive, if any, is through architecture.

[479]Nasser al-Din al-Assad is the President of the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilization Research, (Al al-Bait Foundation), Amman.
[480]Jamal Badran is a traditional Islamic designer and artist (see chapter on Palestine).
[481]Ekmeluddin Ihsanoglu is the Director-General, Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, Istanbul.
[482]Muamer Ülker is the Director of the Sulaymaniya Library, Istanbul.

The development that has taken place on certain architectural features such as the dome and the arch which have been re-employed in modern mosques and dwellings are accepted as the natural course of evolution of traditional shapes. Even new building materials such as cement and aluminum are not looked down upon. This could be related to the functional quality of a building that complies to the principle of Islamic art which states that every creative effort should serve a practical as well as an aesthetic purpose. Yet, how do we explain the thousands of paintings, graphics, sculptures and ceramics produced, which draw from the rich heritage of classical Arabic calligraphy? What explanation is there for the works of art that not only seek to please the eye of the viewer but offer a spiritual food for his soul? It is possible that only works which fall within the boundaries of Pure Calligraphy carry such a spiritual message that could satisfy the soul. However, art in its global definition has greatly changed. The evolution that has taken place in the West, since the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance has moved art from the realm of the soul to that of the senses.

The same applies to Islamic art. Since the last century, Islamic artists have turned to Western aesthetics. The weakening of Islamic civilization, coupled by the spread of Western culture and superior Western technology, have induced artists in the Islamic world to evolve their technique and mode of expression. Consequently, art in the Islamic world has been divorced from utilitarian use. The Islamic artist could not go on repeating his old art forms. The artist had the choice of either aping the West or evolving his own style, while benefitting from his modern training. His search for identity has led him back to his roots where he finds a basis for evolution and satisfaction. The love-hate relationship with the West could have guided the Islamic artist to isolationism, which would have killed his creativity. In his quest to satisfy

his ego and individuality, as well as utilize his training and the new art materials, the contemporary Islamic artist has found a middle ground in the modern school of calligraphic art. Through its principles, he can continue to be creative without severing himself from either his past or the present. Thus, the Calligraphic School of Art is a combination of Islamic as well as modern Western teachings, provided it abides by certain Islamic aesthetics that prevent it from reaching a degree of vulgarity.

Islamic art itself has borrowed from previous civilizations since its inception and throughout its history. Even after it matured and created its own styles, the inter-cultural exchange continued without having a deleterious effect on Islamic aesthetics. For example, the influence of Chinese painting on Ilkhanid miniatures in borrowed forms and style, to be accepted as an Islamic art form in all respects, seeped down into Persian miniature painting. Similarly, when contemporary Islamic artists borrow from Western traditions and art forms and mix them with their traditional aesthetics to develop new and sometimes revolutionary styles, their work should also be acknowledged as Islamic. Had there not been an art of calligraphy in Islamic civilization, there would not have been a modern school of calligraphic art. Therefore, it is irrelevant whether or not calligraphy, within the different styles of the Calligraphic School, adheres to classical traditional scripts. Any development in style must evolve from a foundation. As long as the foundation and the aesthetics are clearly established, there can be continuity. Before judging the Calligraphic School of Art as being a genuine continuity of Islamic art or not, one should take into consideration the worldwide changes that have occurred in the concept of art in general in this century up till today as well as the conditions in which contemporary Islamic artists grow and live.

Following the movements in the Islamic world which have attempted to ground contemporary art in a local environment, a new question must be raised. What is the relationship between national and international art? How can a contemporary Islamic artist relate to international art, in an ever shrinking global village without being accused of regionalism or separatism in his work? If a contemporary Islamic artist seeks to identify with his or her traditional art forms, within a modern context, would he or she be regressing or progressing? The answer comes from the West. Artists like Paul Klee and Kandinsky were inspired by the east. Their works, along with diverse Western art styles, have been instrumental in revealing to Islamic artists like Jawad Salim, Jamil Hamoudi, Nja Mahdaoui, Muhammad Chebaa, Shaker Hassan, Khalid Khreis, and Rafa al-Nasiri among others, the graphic value of Arabic calligraphy. Following them, a younger generation of Western artists such as Hans Hartung, Brion Gysen, Soullage, Georges Mathieus, Jean Degottex, André Masson, Juan Miró, Lee U Fan, Henri Michaux, Simon Hantai, and Jean Fautier has created abstract works inspired by Arabic calligraphy, while falling within the definition of international art. However, those artists do not belong to the Islamic Calligraphic School of Art as defined in this thesis because their implementation of calligraphic forms is purely visual and does not involve comprehensible characters, except perhaps by accident. The meaning of the Arabic is left behind in the process of cultural transfer.

Once more, it should be mentioned that each letter of the Arabic alphabet is associated with the beginning of certain words or the opening verses of the Qur'ān in the subconscious of the literate viewer. If the artist using those letters is himself or herself illiterate, then to him or her and the

viewer, they are no more than silent abstract shapes. The Islamic artists closest to the above-mentioned Western artists, are those who have adopted abstract calligraphy, in particular the pseudo-script. Nevertheless, the two cannot be fully equated with each other because the intentions or nīyya of each are different. The transformation that the Islamic artist brings about in his characters, from the legible to the incomprehensible, comes first and foremost as a result of understanding their inherent significance, be it apparent or esoteric. On the other hand, given the absence of the dimension of meaning and literary association, the Western artist's employment of the characters is superficial, except when he is versed in the language.

A second point that separates the Western abstract artist who is inspired by Arabic calligraphy from the contemporary Islamic calligraphic artist is tradition. Each of the two belongs to a different civilization and has lived and grown in a distinctly different environment with a diverse background. Tradition cannot be superficially transplanted or acquired for it is built into one's subconscious. No matter how much one tries to borrow from the other, their respective heritage will interfere with their artistic output. The art of Arabic calligraphy is an integral part of Islamic art and will always be part of the tradition of Islamic artists. At this point a quotation by James W. Allen, the Keeper of Eastern Art at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, seems appropriate:

> "For to me, as a western Christian curator of Islamic art collections, it is above all in Arabic calligraphy that Islamic identity belongs. And it is my belief that it is the ability of contemporary artists to express that calligraphic tradition in a

contemporary way that will bring Islamic art once again into the forefront of artistic expression world wide."[483]

It has been established that the contemporary Calligraphic School of Art, prevalent throughout the Islamic world, is grounded in its own culture and serves an aesthetic value which pleases both the eye and the soul. Therefore, it is the natural continuation of Islamic art in the 20th century.

As long as there is Islam, there is also Islamic art. However, it is the desire of the artist in the Islamic world, to express himself in an original form which can be identified, comprehended, judged and valued as authentically Islamic, while using a language that can be universally perceived. Moreover, to keep a balanced equation, the artist also has to integrate into international art movements by offering new concepts, techniques, forms and styles taken from his own culture while absorbing what others have to offer. Such cultural interaction is integral to the development of contemporary Islamic culture as well as Western culture.

[483]From the introduction to the catalogue of Ali Omar Ermes Art and Ideas exhibition, 1992, p.10.

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Issam Badr File.

Samira Badran File.

Bastawi Baghdadi File.

Kamal Boullata File.

Tayseer Barakat File.

Muhanna Durra File.

Yasser Duwaik File.

Kamala Ibrahim File.

Ramzi Moustafa File.

Fatima Muhib File.

Ahmad Nawash File.

Majdoub Rabah File.

Samir Salameh File.

Laila Shawa Fille.

Nasir Shoura File.

Vladimir Tamari File.

Mahmoud Taha File.

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Adendum.

p. 9: "..whatever originated in the Ottoman capital was soon emulated in Beirut, Jerusalem, Damascus, Cairo and Tunis" instead of "..whatever originated in the Ottoman capital was soon emulated in Beirut, Damascus, Cairo and Tunis".

p. 43: par. 2: "The first sultan to show an active interest in Western art was Mahmoud II (1808-1839)" instead of: "The first sultan to show interest in Western art was Mahmud II (1808-1839)".

p.163: par. 1: "..only at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries did Iranians (including students) start travelling to Europe in considerable numbers" instead of "..only at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries did Iranians (including students) start travelling to Europe".

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Errata.

p.68, line 9: Herbert Read instead of Herbert Reed.

p.127, line 3: "At the age of 36" instead of "At the age of 66".

p.194, line 15: delete (fig.101).

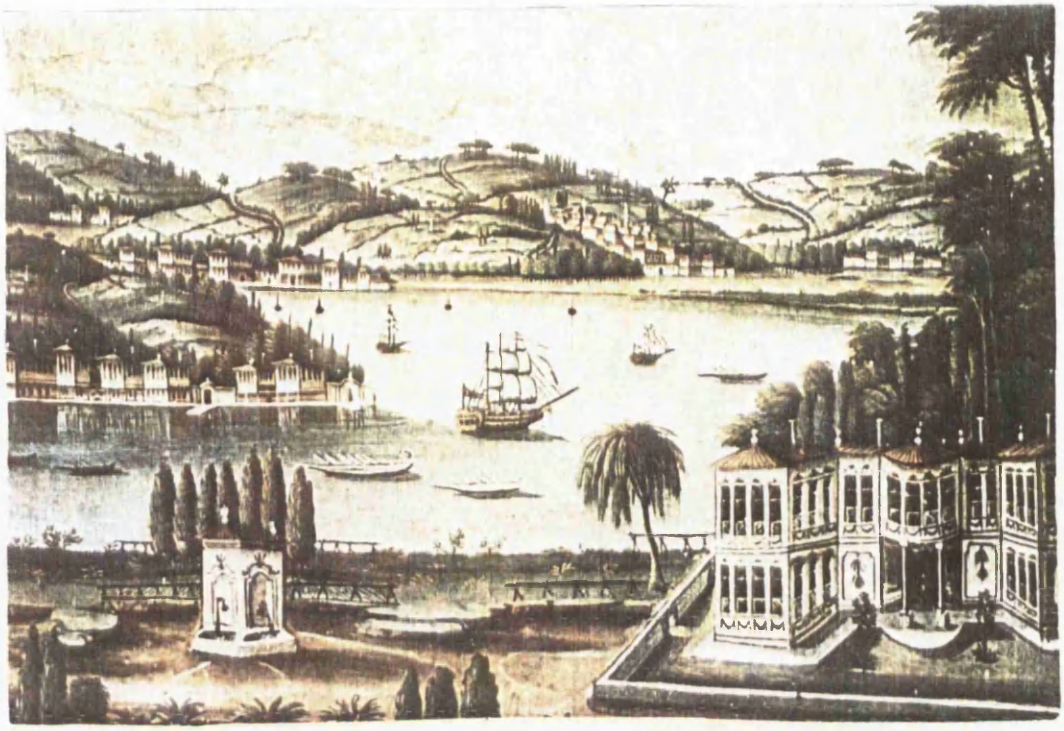
A SURVEY OF MODERN PAINTING IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONTEMPORARY CALLIGRAPHIC SCHOOL.

by

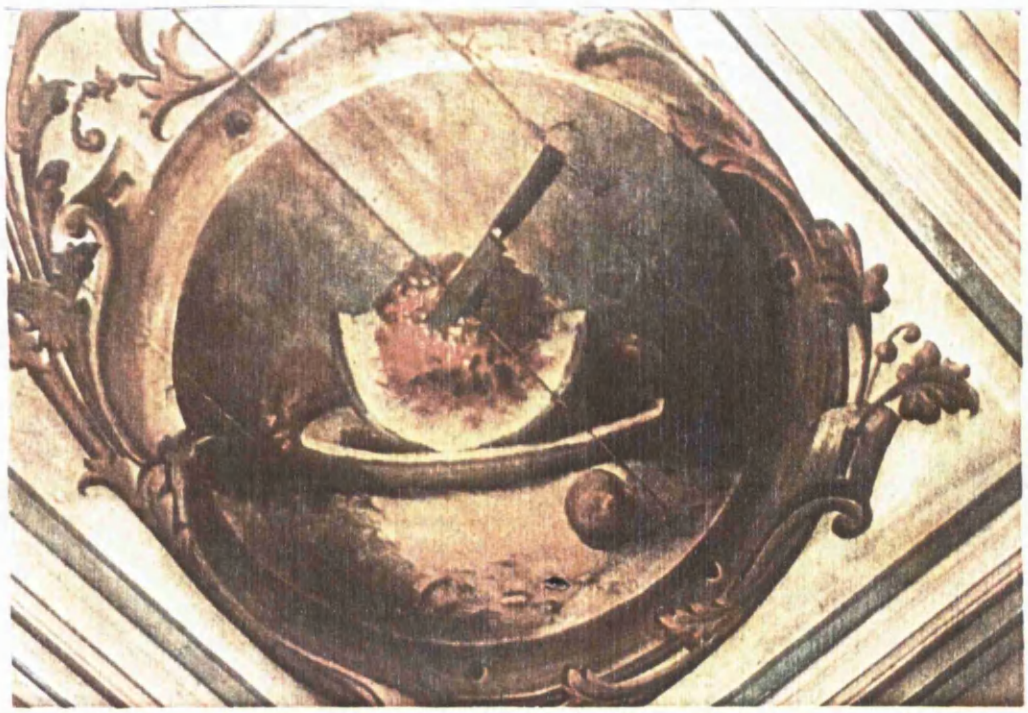
WIJDAN ALI
SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES,
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

A Dissertation submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.
1993.

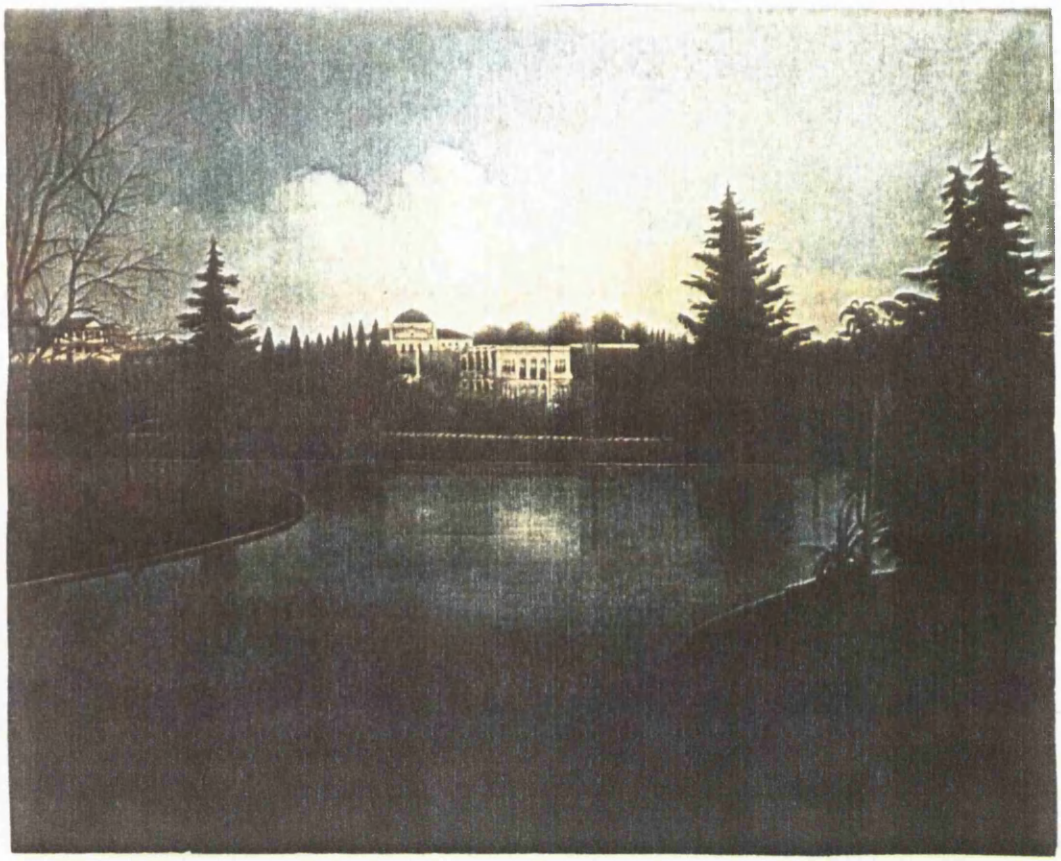
Illustrations.



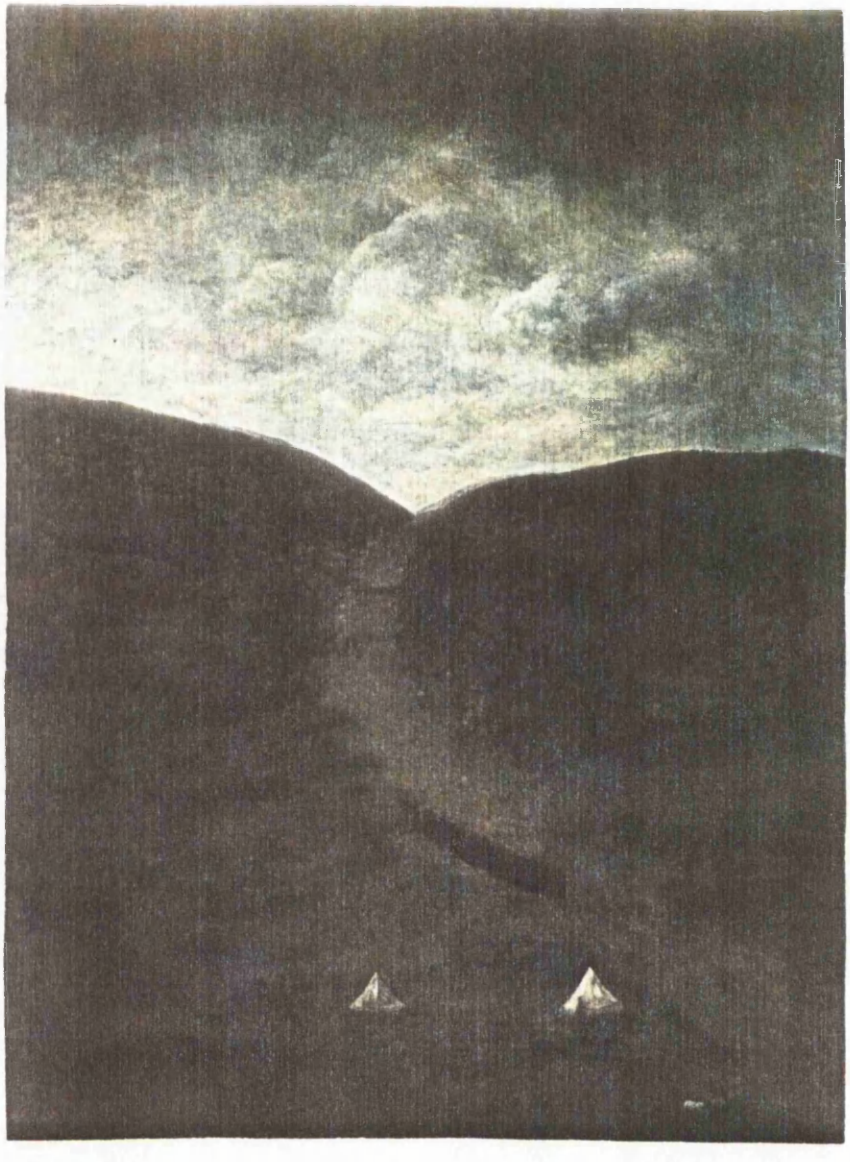
1. Ottoman mural painting: A view of the Bosphoros - *Sadullah Pasa Yalisi*, Istatnbul 1st quarter of the 19th century.



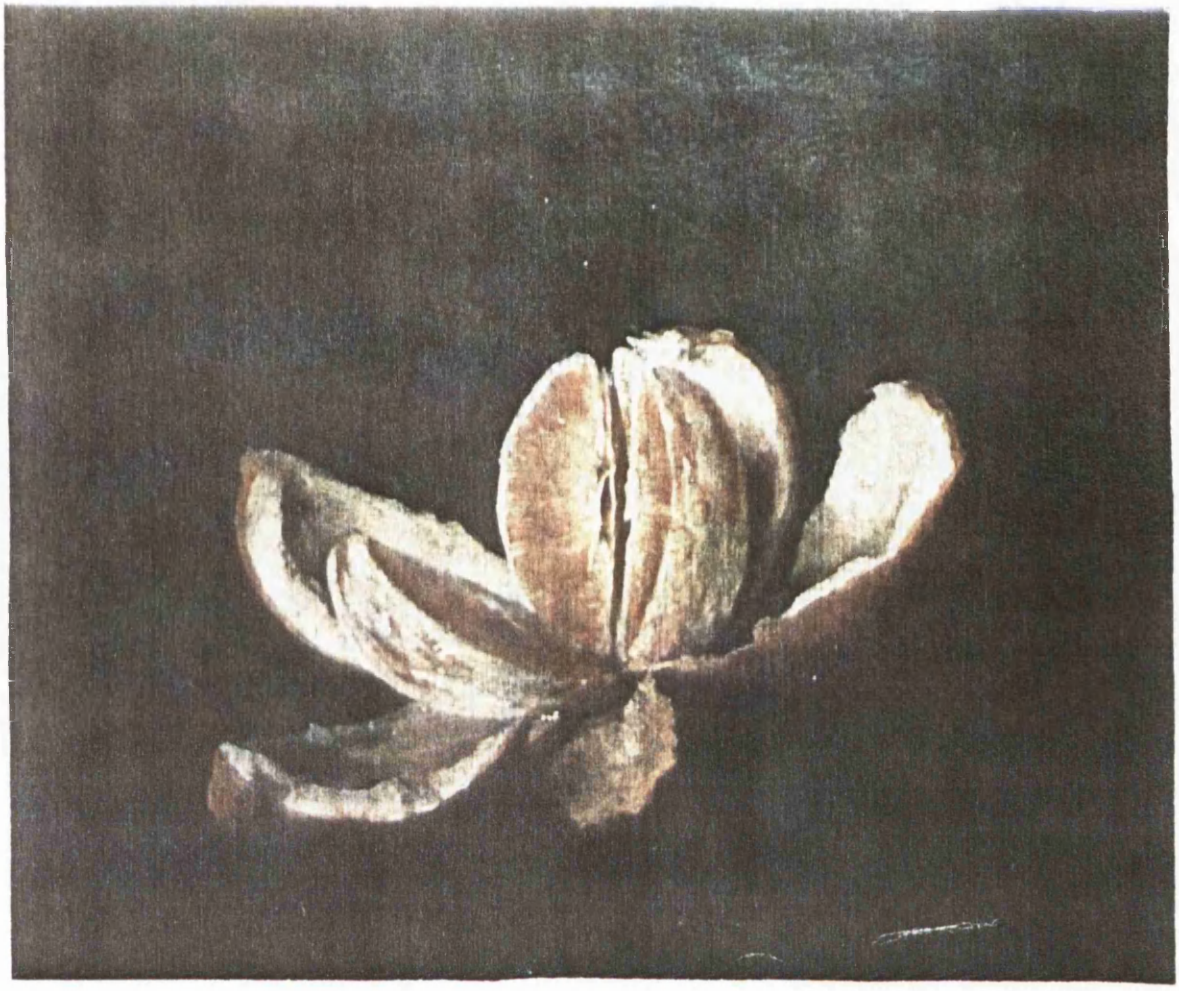
2. Ottoman mural painting: *Still life with watermelon* - the ceiling of Basmabeyinci Konagi, last quarter of the 19th century.



3. Ahmet Ragip: *Garden of Yildiz Palace*.



4. Şeker Ahmet Paşa: *Military Practice on the Hills of Kagith.*



5. Süleyman Seyyit: *Still-life with Oranges.*

6. Osman Hamdi Bey: *Mihrab*.

7. Halife Abdüllmecit Efendi: *Beethoven in the Saray.*

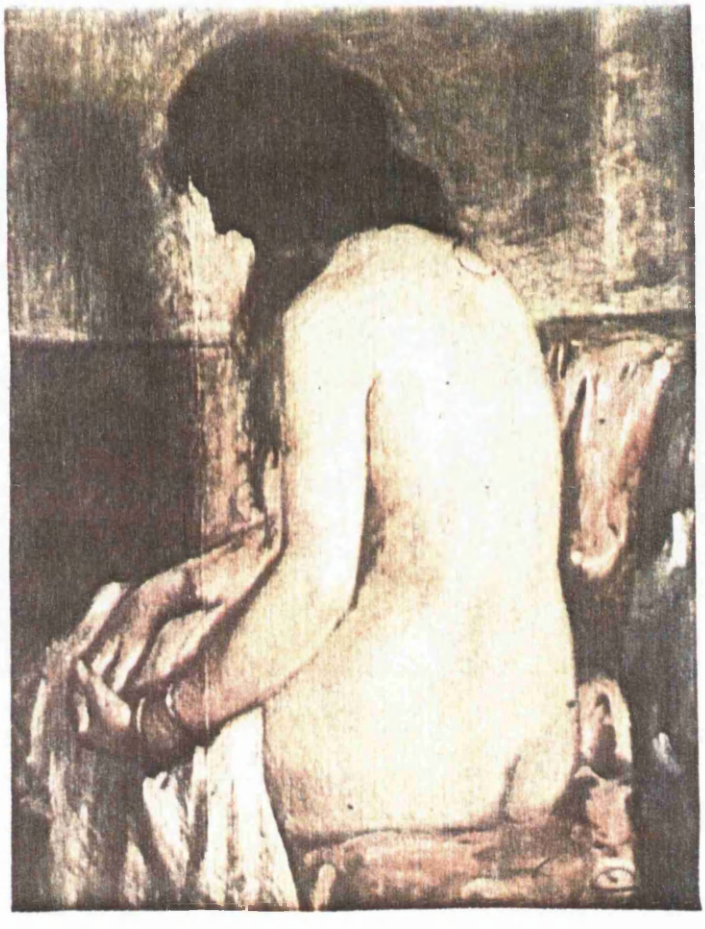
8. Mihri Müşfik: *A Portrait of a Turkish Lady.*

9. Ibrahim Çalli: *Magnolias*.

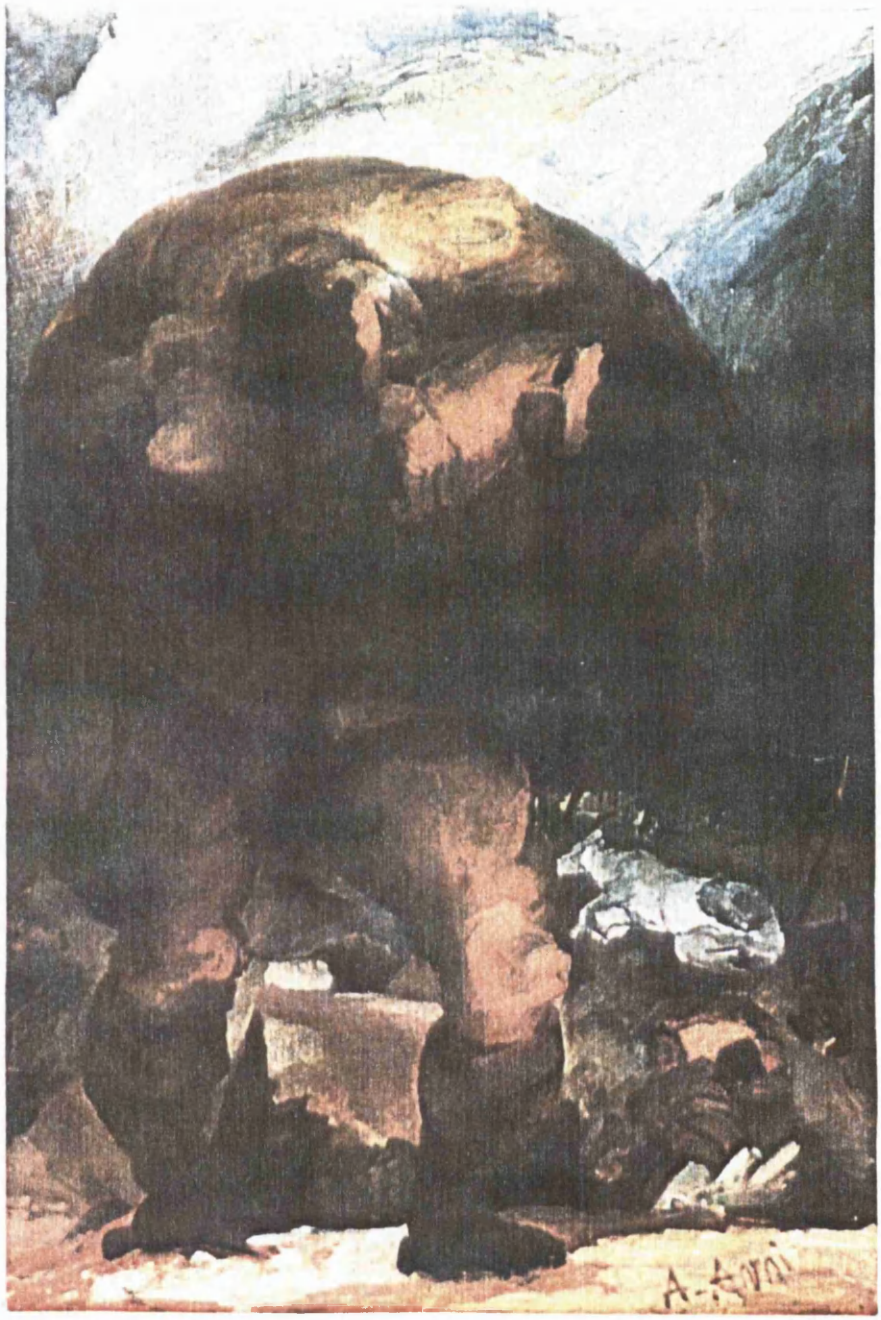
10. Nazmi Ziya Güran: *The Portrait of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.*

11. Hikmet Onat: *The Boat Quay of Kabataş in Istanbul.*

12. Avni Lifij: *Municipal Works in Kadiköy, Istanbul.*



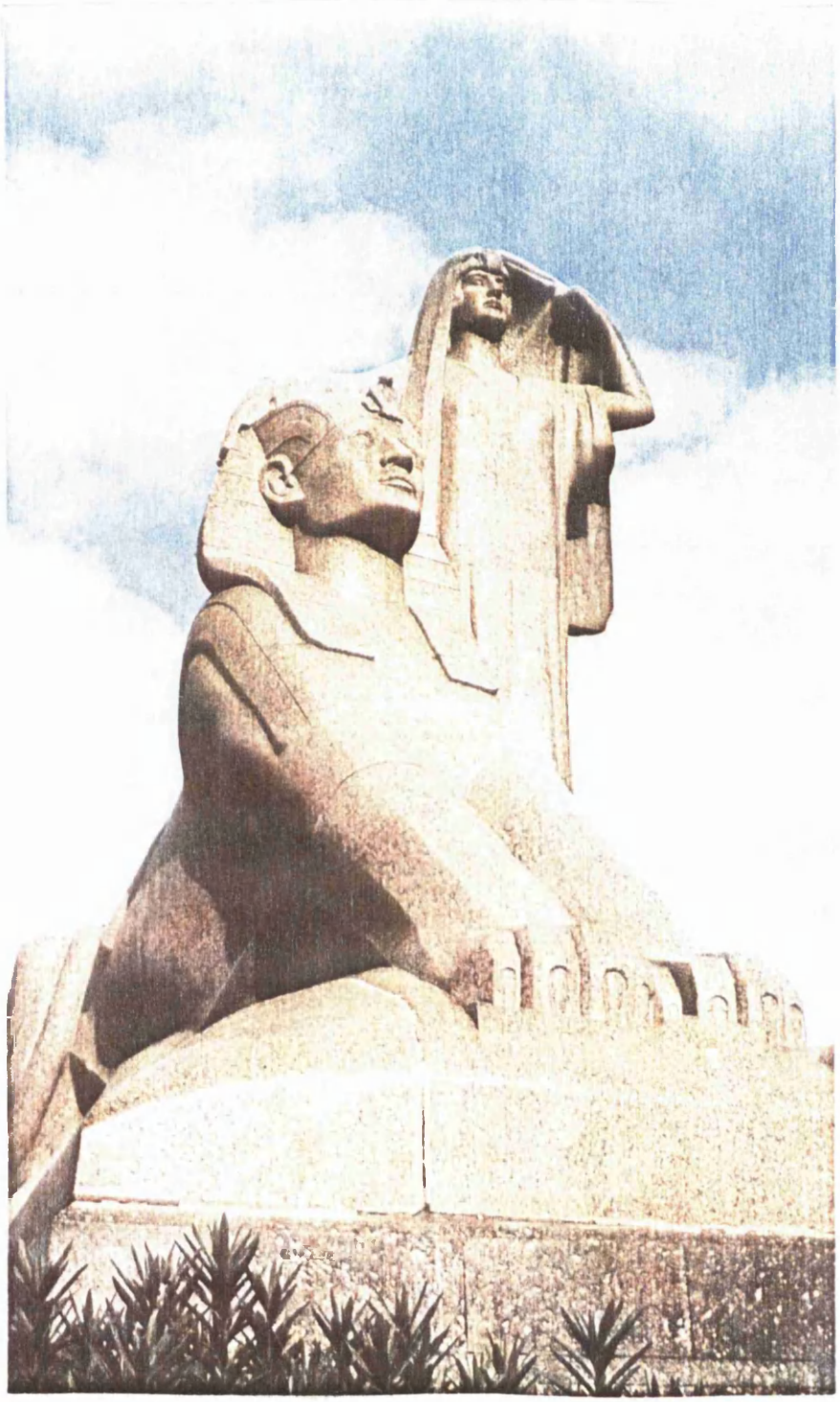
13. Feyhaman Duran: *Nude*.



14. Ali Çelebi: *Wounded Soldier.*

15. Refik Epikman: *Jazz.*

16. Nurullah Berk: *Still-life with Playing Cards.*



17. Mahmoud Mukhtar: *Egypt's Awakening*.

18. Mahmoud Said: *Banat Bahri*.

19. Muhammad Nagy: *The Village*.

20. Raghib Ayyad: *A Church.*

21. Ahmad Sabri: *Portrait of Tawfiq al-Hakim*.

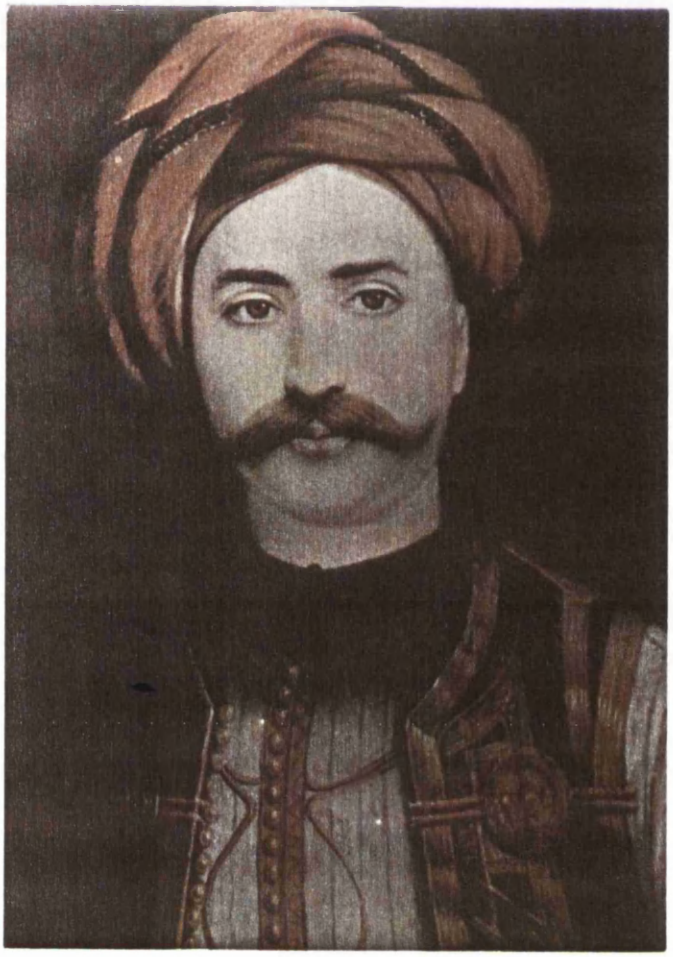
22. Marghuerite Nakhla: *The Stock Exchange*.

23. Moussa Dib: *Patriarch Mikhayel Fadel*. c.1795.

24. Kenaan Dib: *Saint George and the Dragon*. c.1859.

25. Salim Haddad
Salim Tabet. c.1888.

26. Daoud Corm:
Sheikh Chahine Taleb Hobeich.

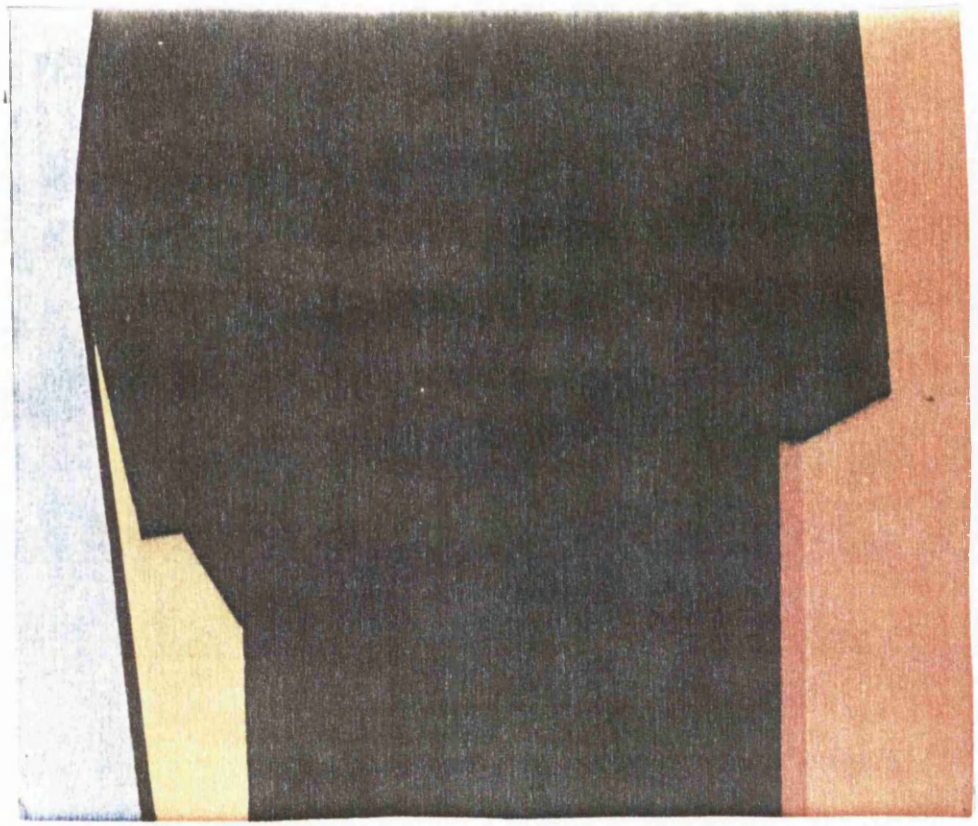


27. Philippe Mourani: *Village Scene*.

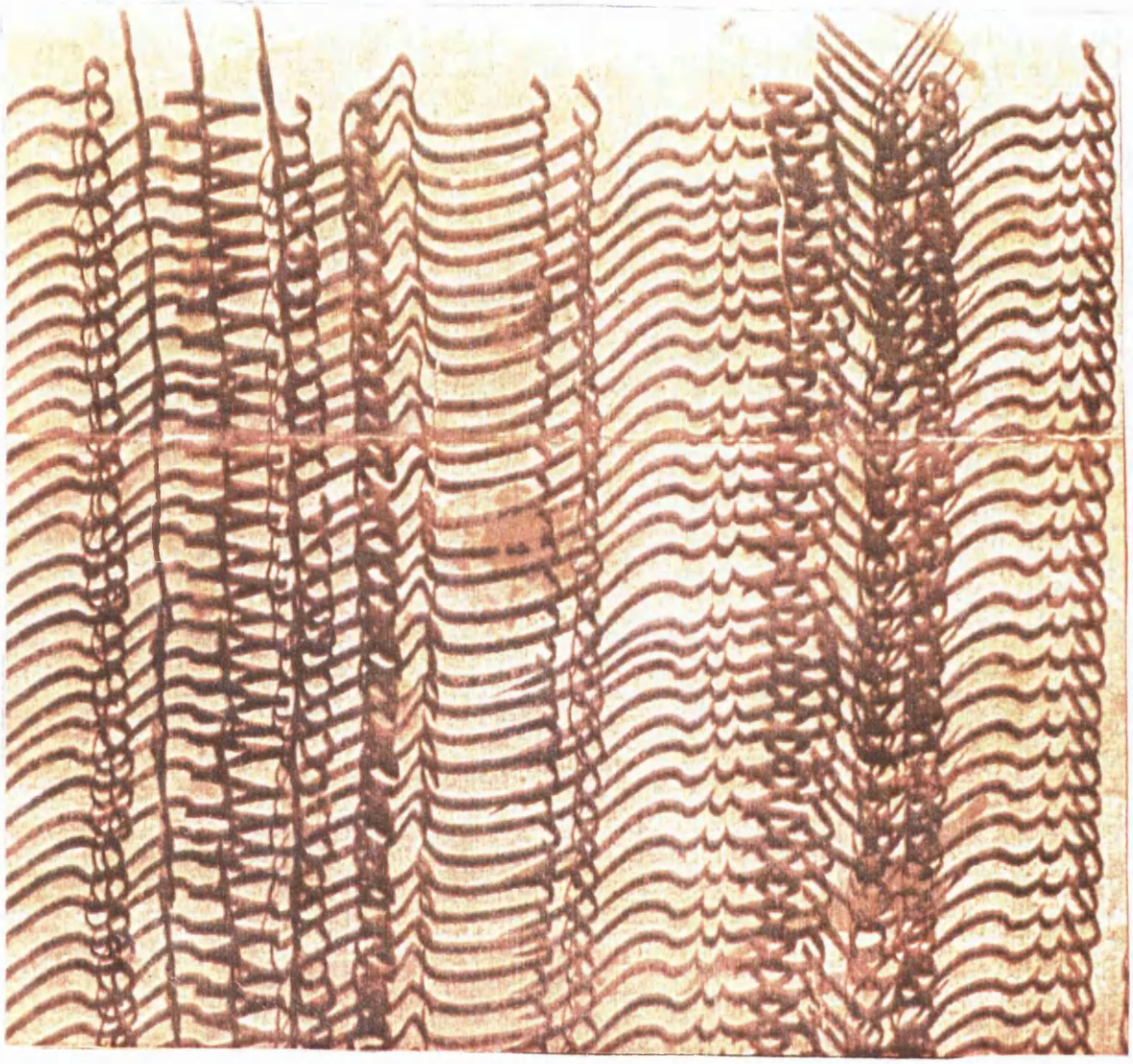
28. Moustapha Farroukh: *Dawn of Day, Twilight of Life*.

29. Salhiba Douaihy: *Bedouin Girl*.

30. Omar Onsi: *The Artist's House*.



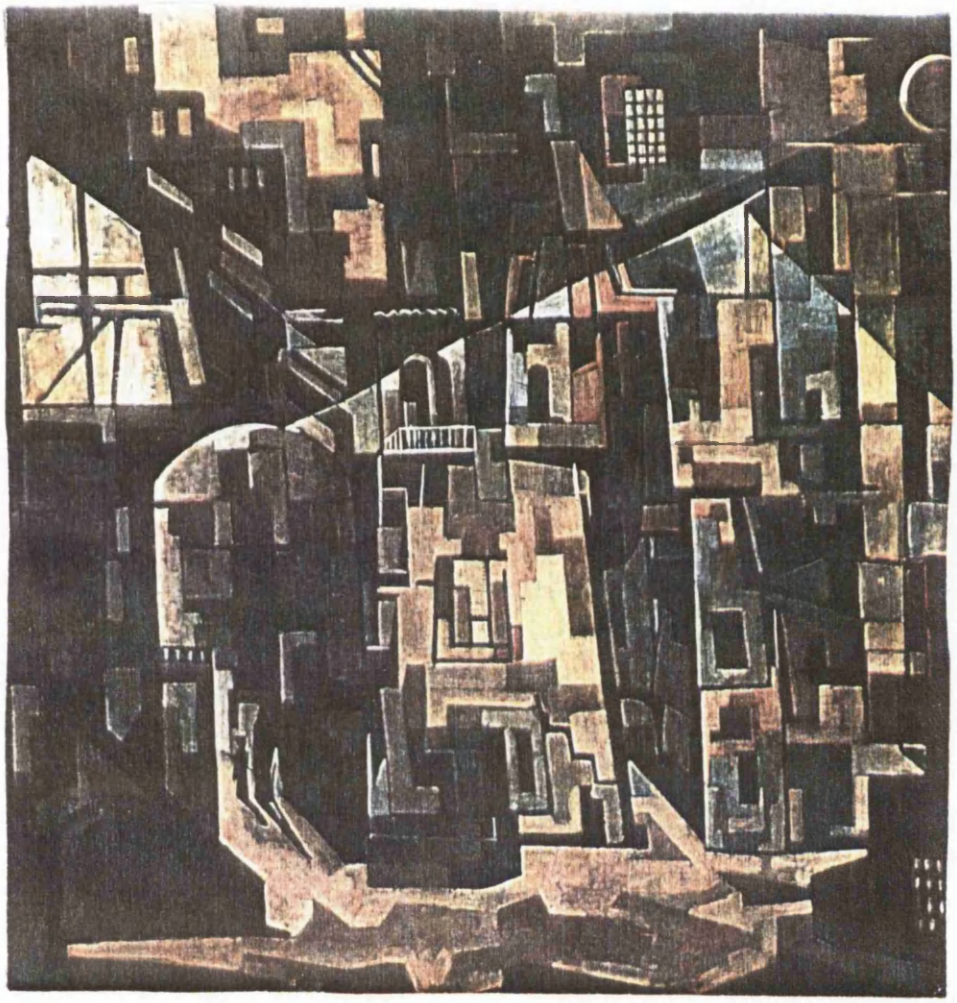
31. Saliba Douaihy: *Abstract.*



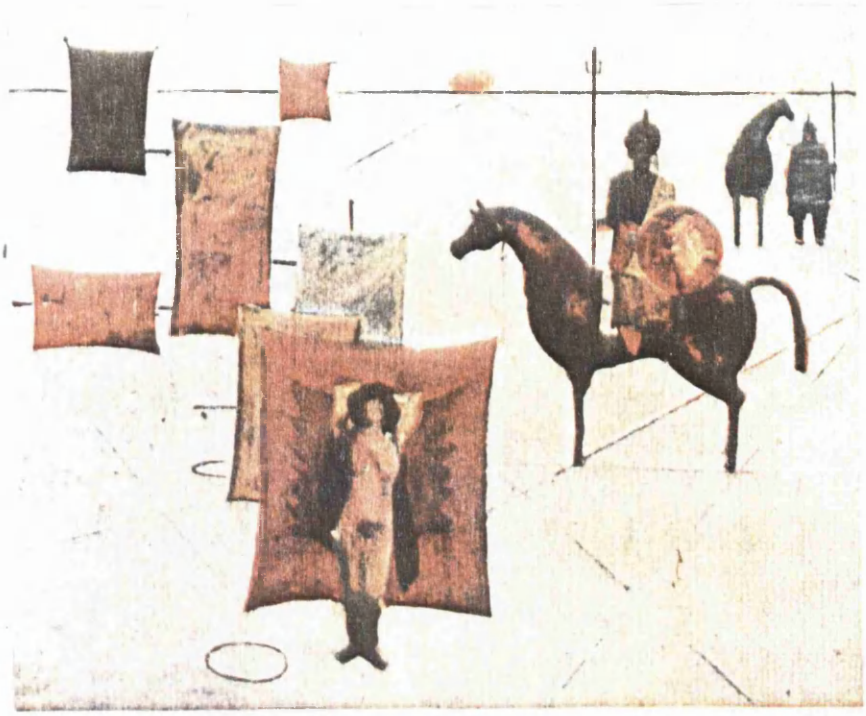
32. Niazi Mawlawi Baghdadi: *Calligraphy.*

33. Abdul Qadir al-Rassam: *The Tigris River.*

34. Faik Hassan: *The Tent.*



35. Hafid Drubi: *A Street in Baghdad.*



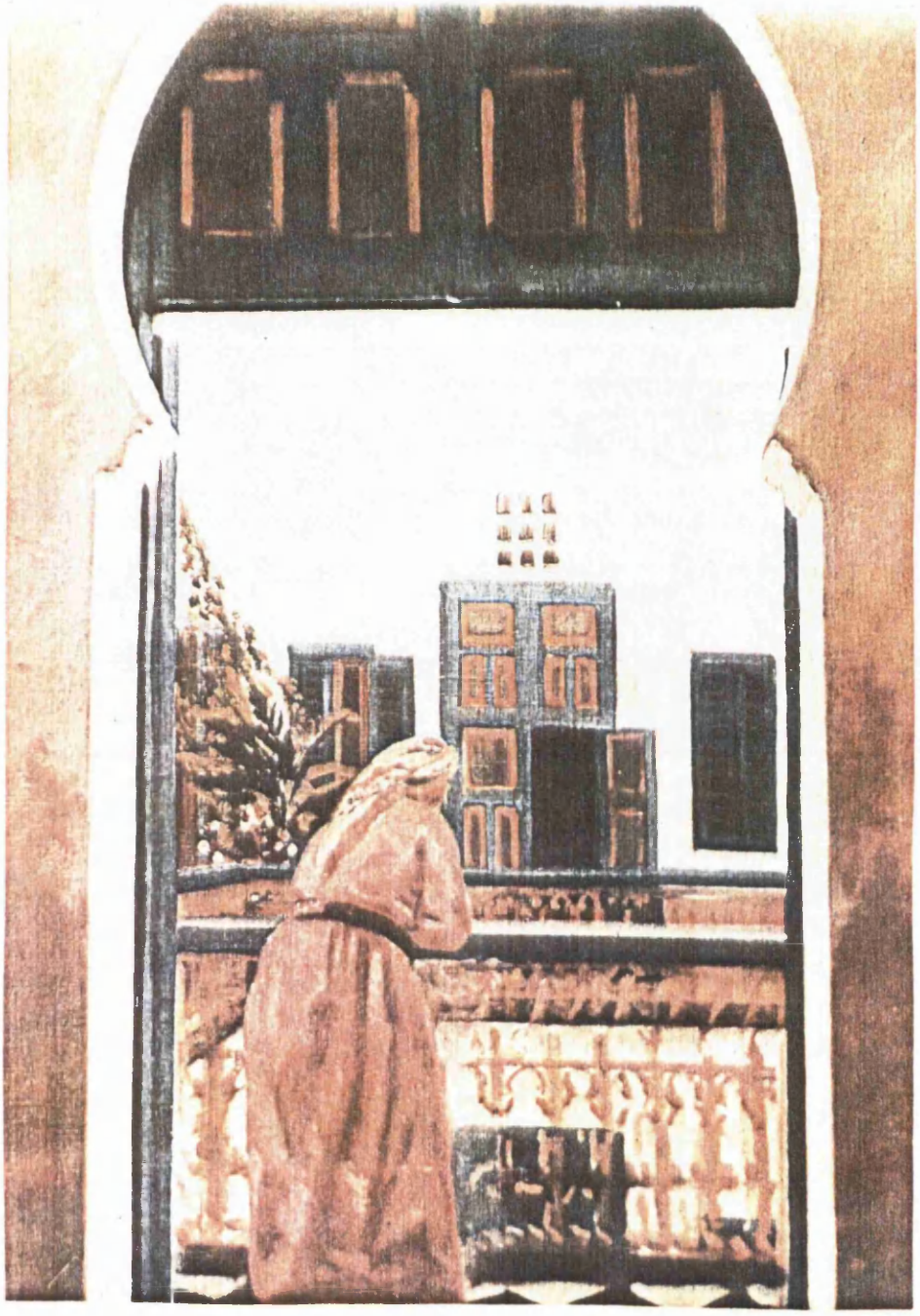
36. Kadim Haidar: *Karbala*.

37. Part of *Triumphal Arch* in Baghdad.

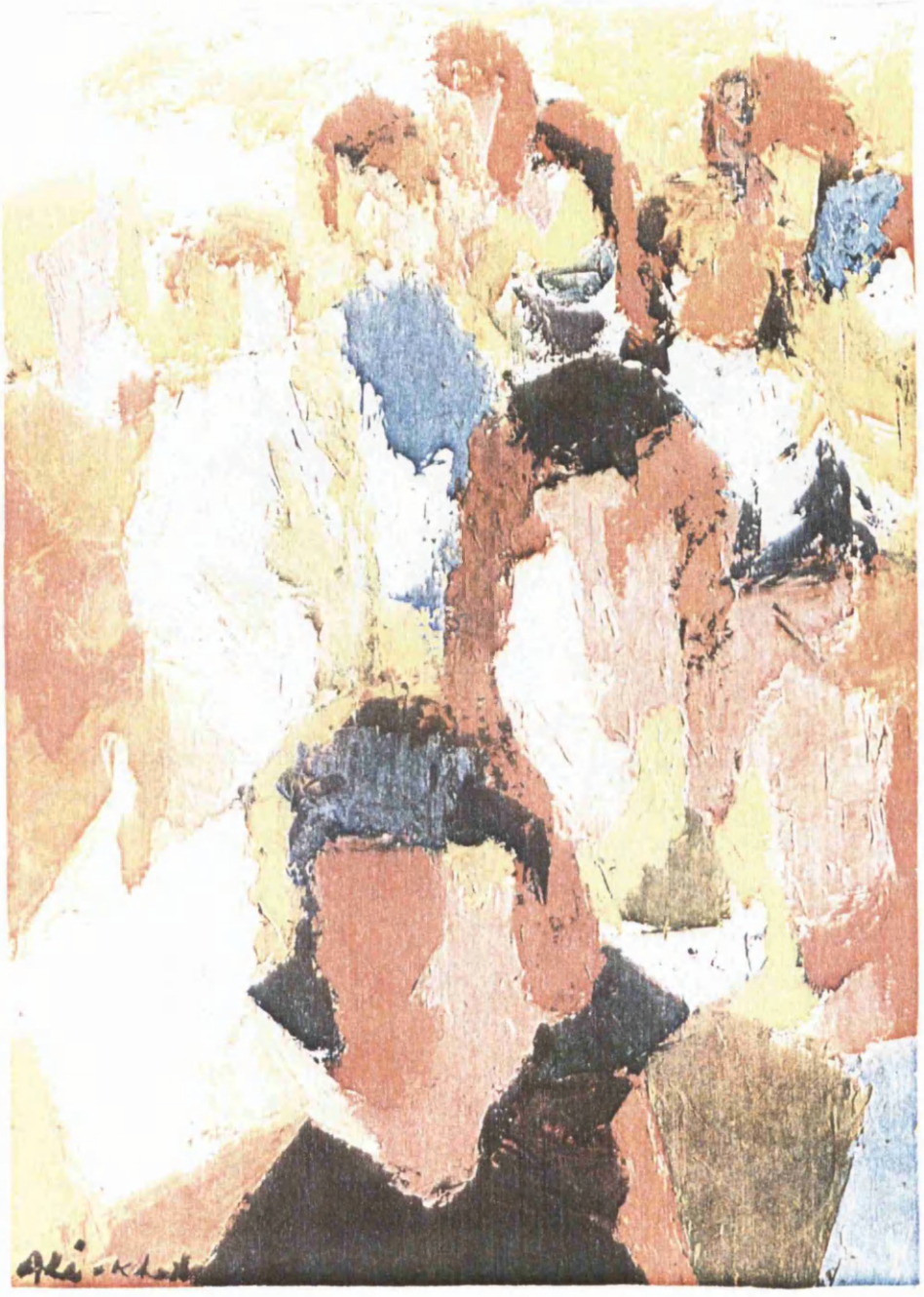
38. Mahoud Ahmad: *The Freedom-fighter President Saddam Hussein with the People.*

39. Alphonse-Étienne Dinet: *Fight Over a Penny.*

40. Mohamed Racim: *Horsman*.

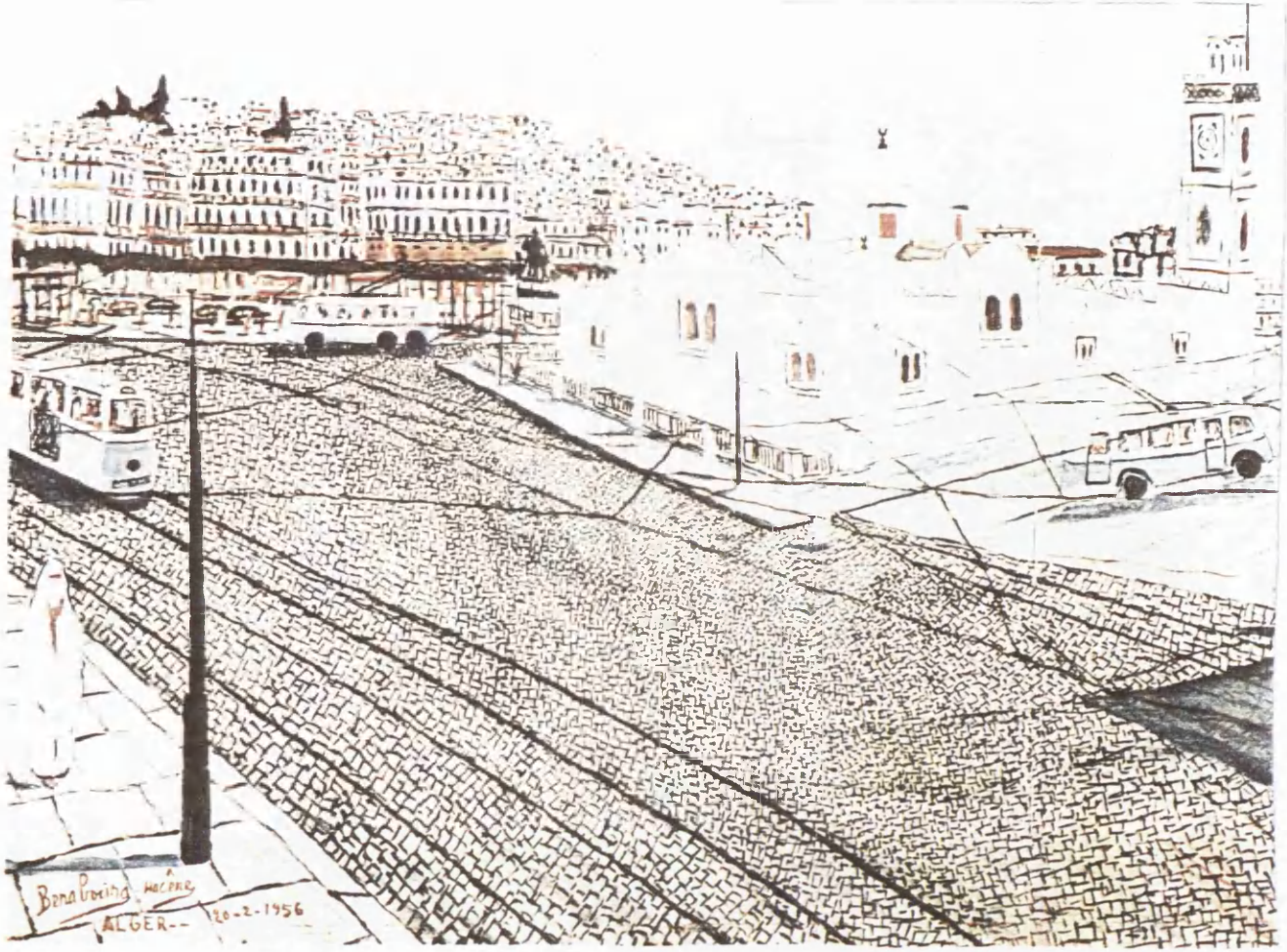


41. Azouaou Mammeri: *Woman in the Patio.*



42. Ali Khodja: *Class Dismissed.*

43. Baya: *Woman with a Bird.*



44. Hacène Benaboura: *Algier 1956.*

45. Mohammed Issiakhem: *Mother and Child.*

46. Mohamed Khadda: *Free Alphabet*.

47. Armand Vergeaud: *Portrait.*

48. Henri Gustave Jossot: *Pharsi Street.*

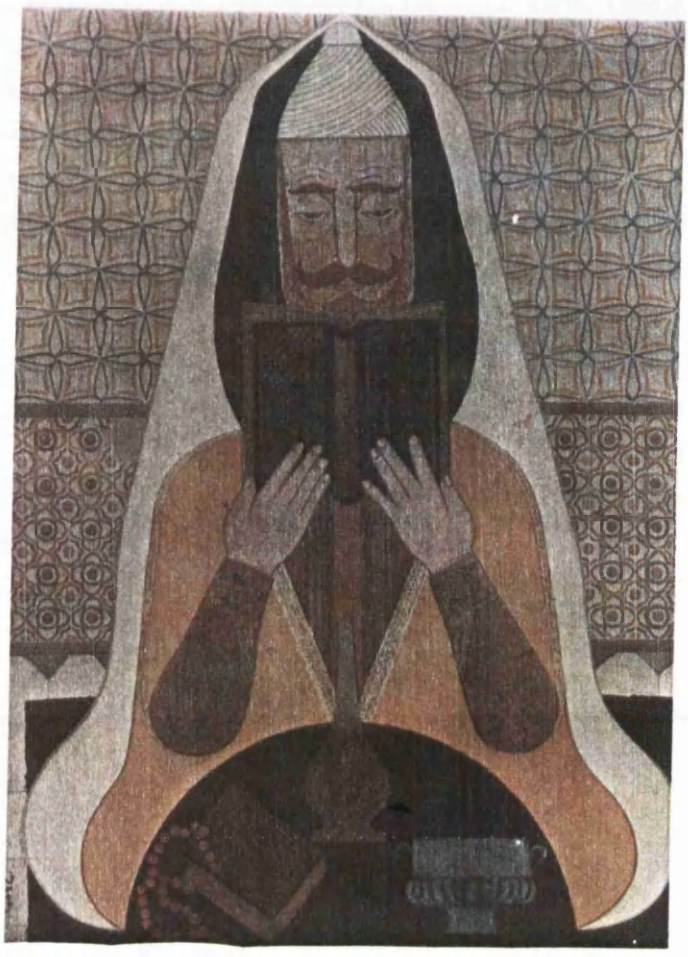
49. Hédi Khayachi: *The Weaver*.

50. Abdulwahab Jilani: *Landscape*.

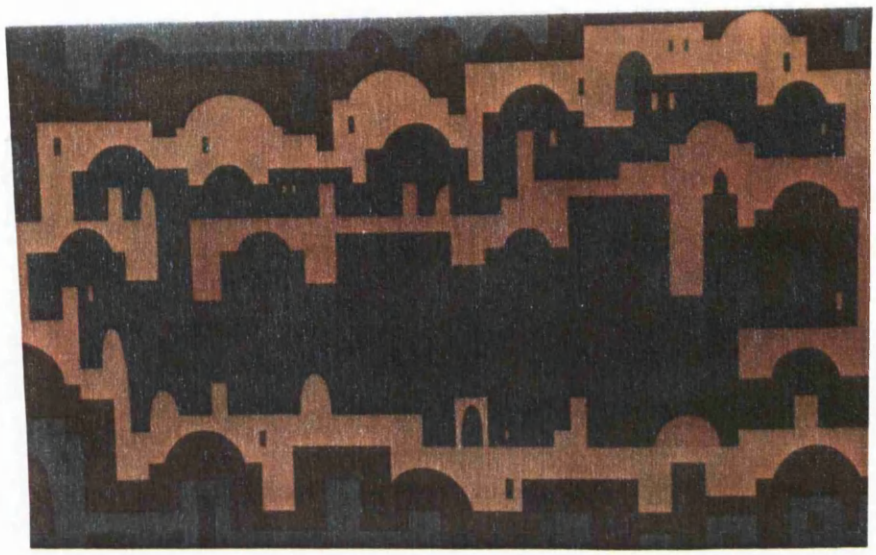
51. Yahia Turki: *Marine*.

52. Abdulaziz ben Rais: *Portrait*.

53. Ammar Farhat: *The Groom*.

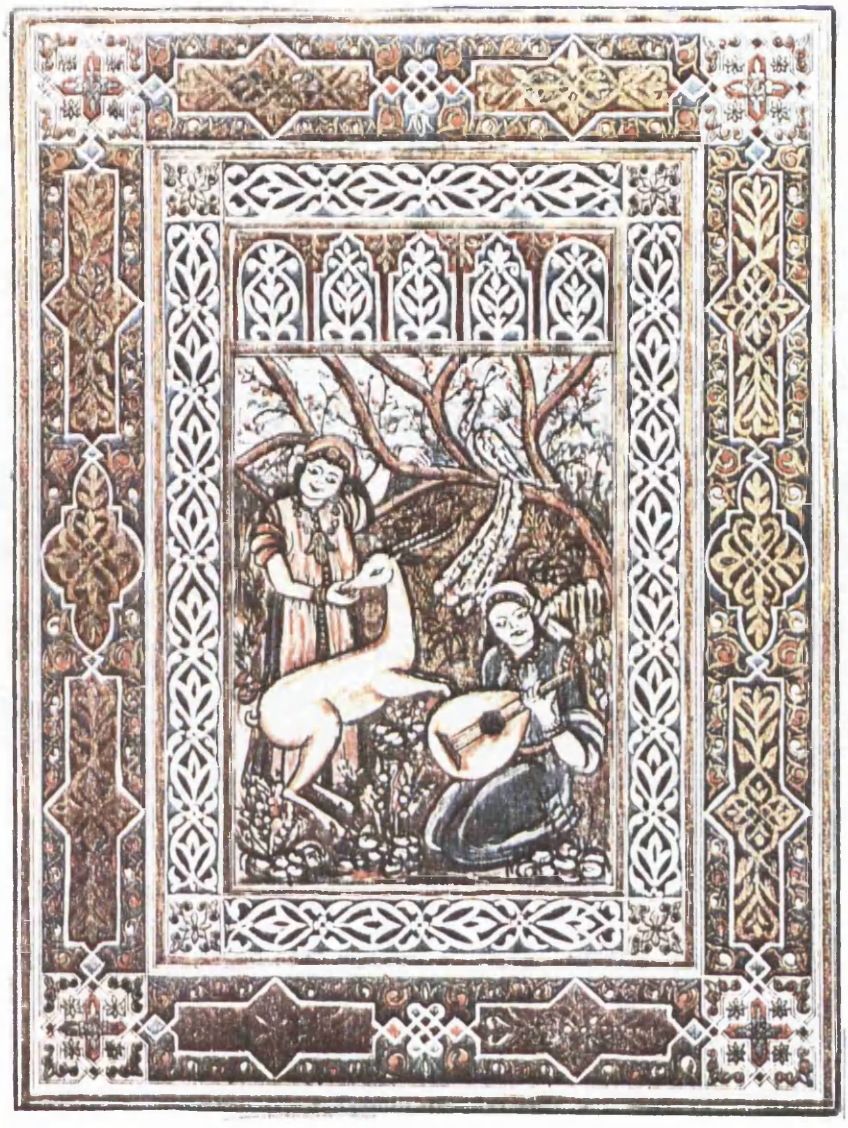


54. Abdul Aziz Gorgi: *The Mufti*.

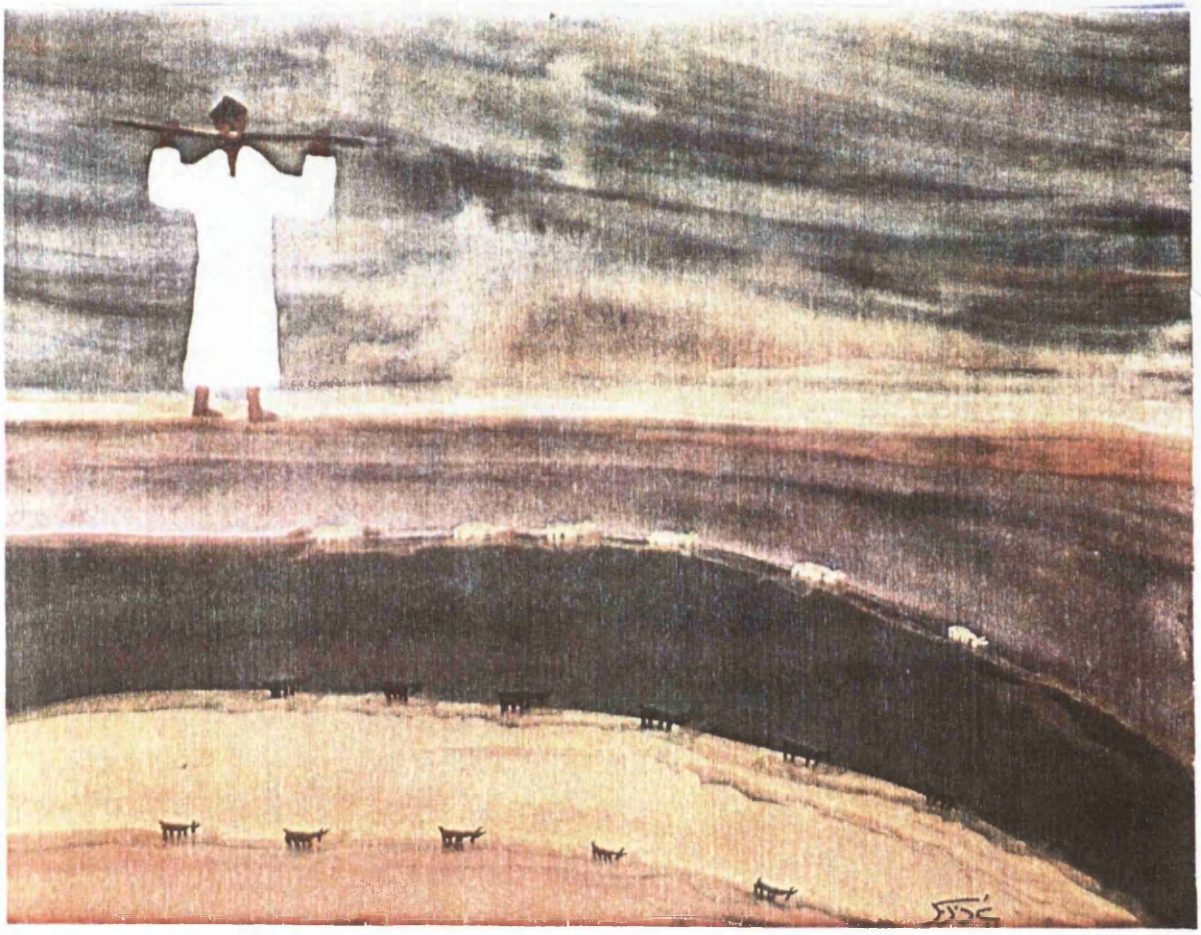


55. Najib Belkhodja: *Untitled.*

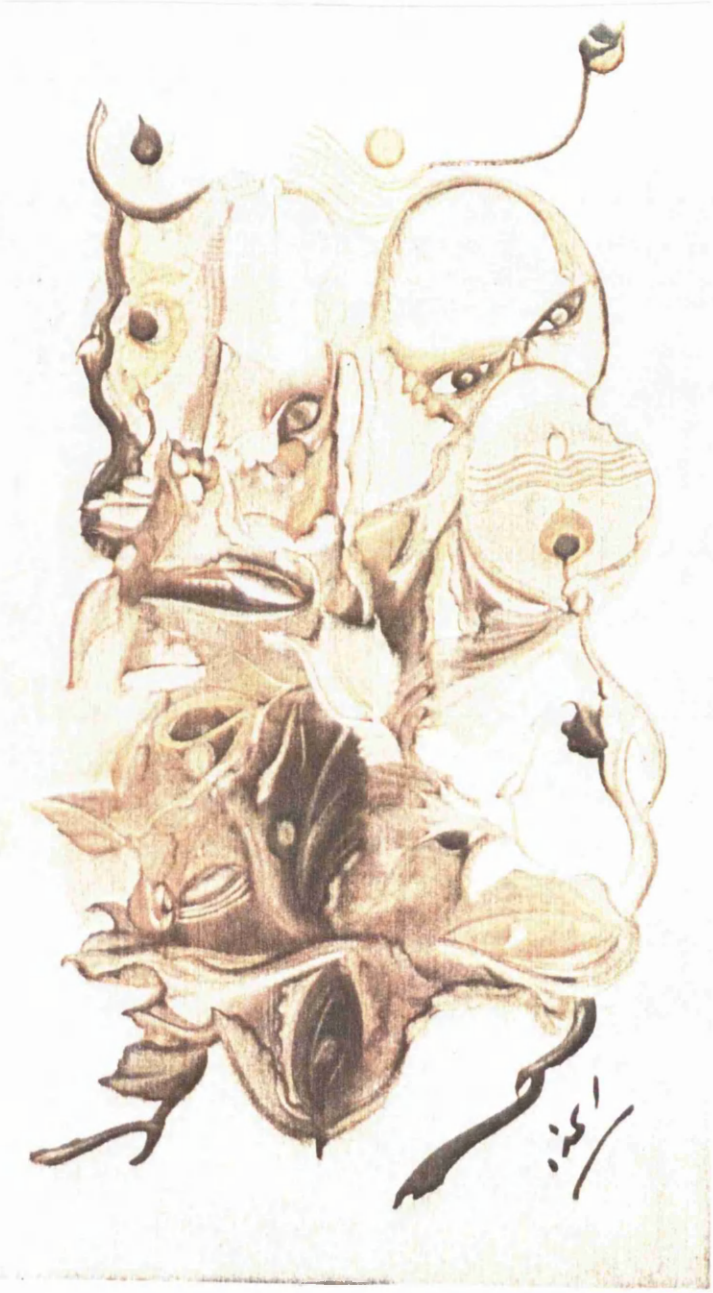
56. Mohamed ben Ali Rbatie: *Bab el-Fas.*



57. Abdelkrim Ouazzani: *Miniature*.

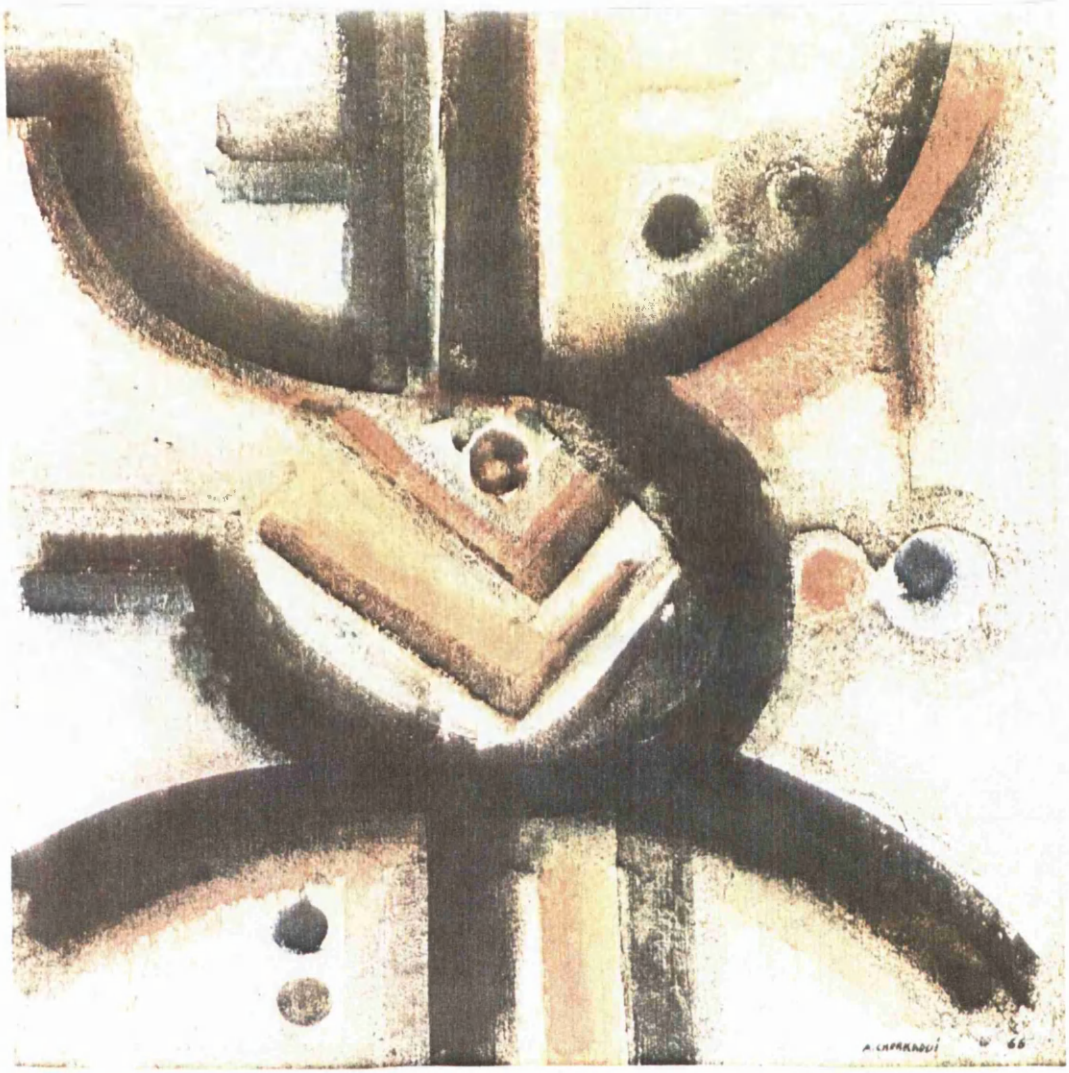


58. Moulay Ahmed Drissi: *Untitled.*

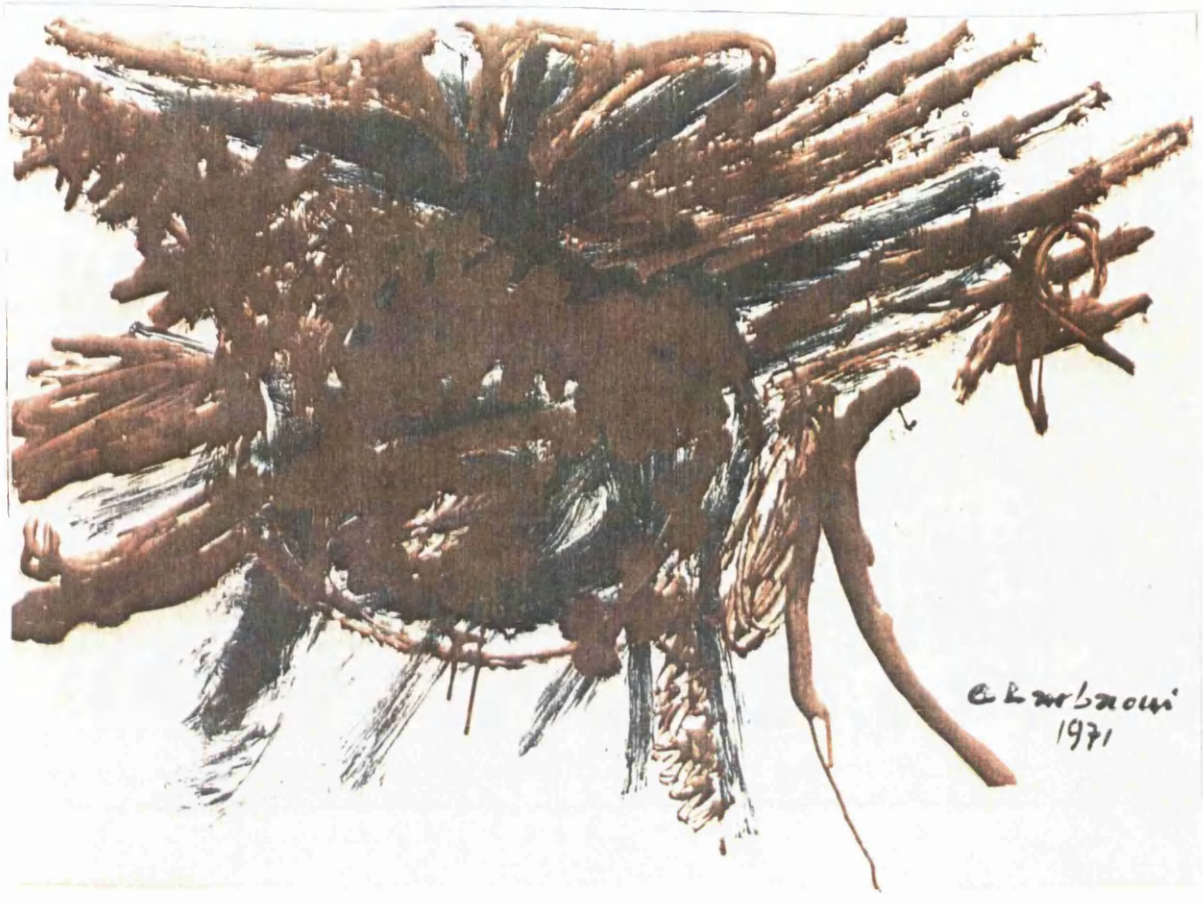


59. Mahjoubi Aherdane: *The Permanence*.

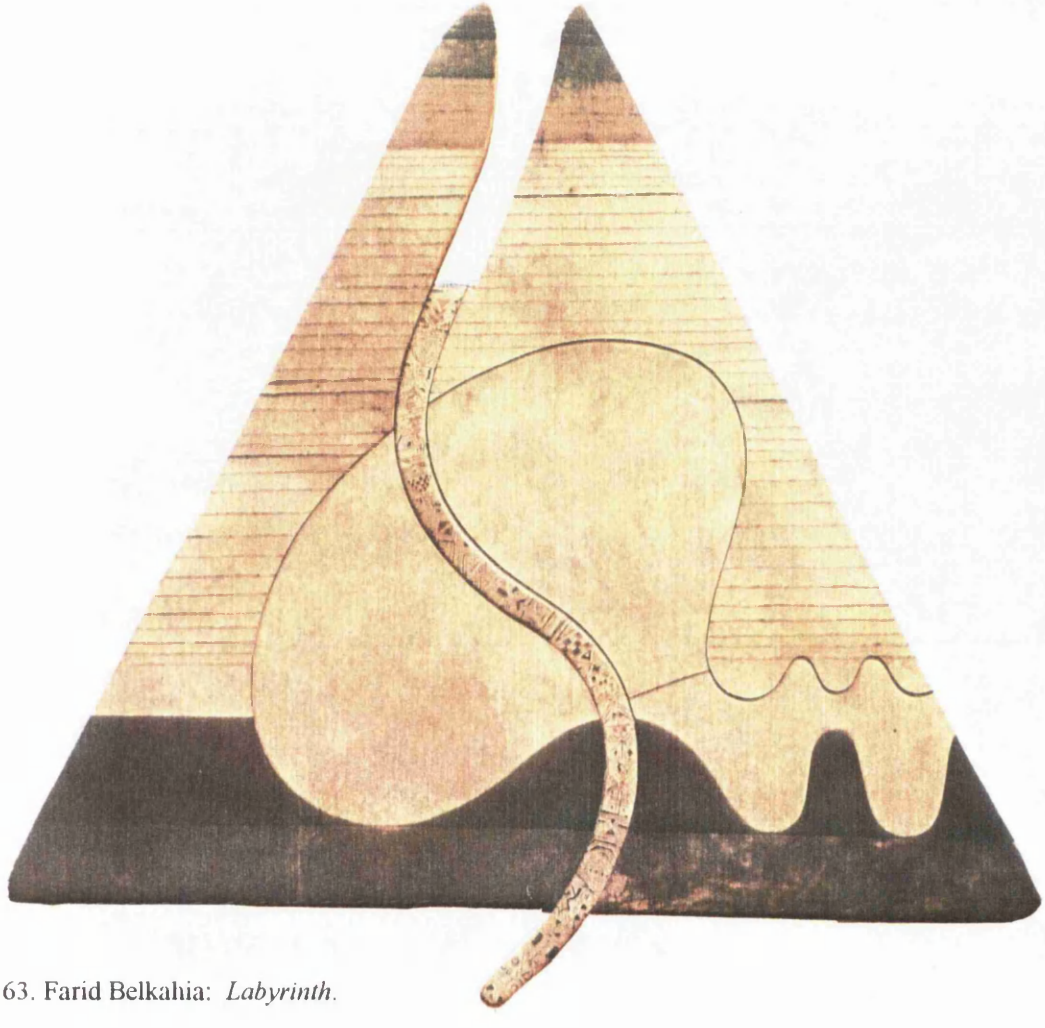
60. Meriem Meziane: *Untitled.*



61. Ahmed Cherkaoui: *Solace*.

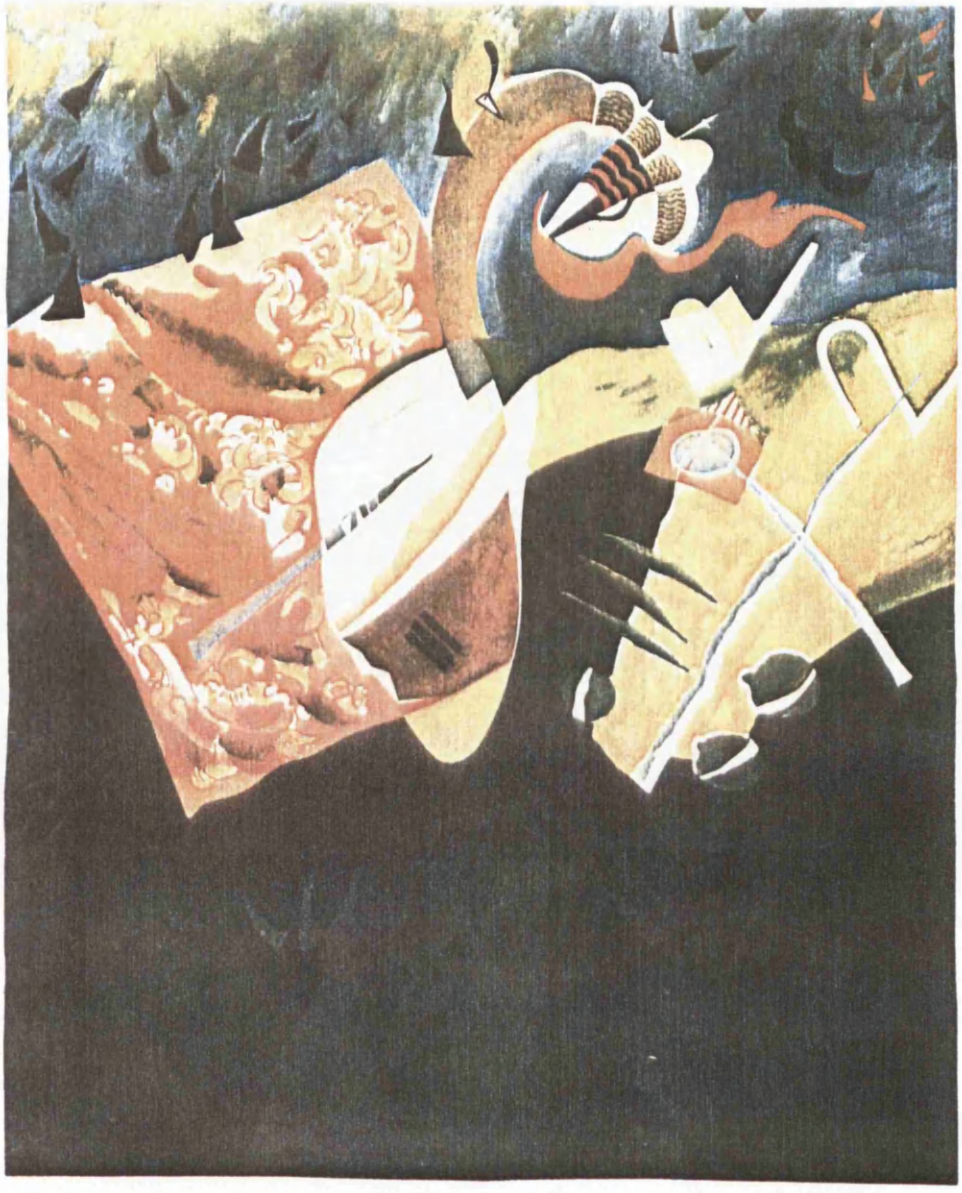


62. Jilali Gharbaoui: *Untitled.*



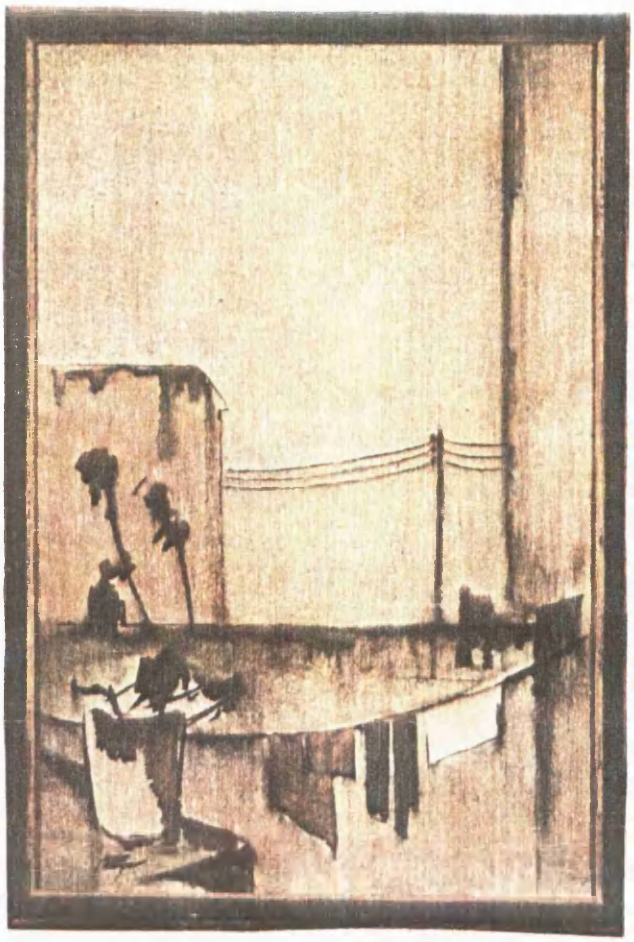
63. Farid Belkahia: *Labyrinth*.

64. Mohamed Melehi: *Interruption*.



65. Mohamed Chebaa: *Untitled.*

66. Sani' al-Mulk: *Portrait Sketch* c.1855.

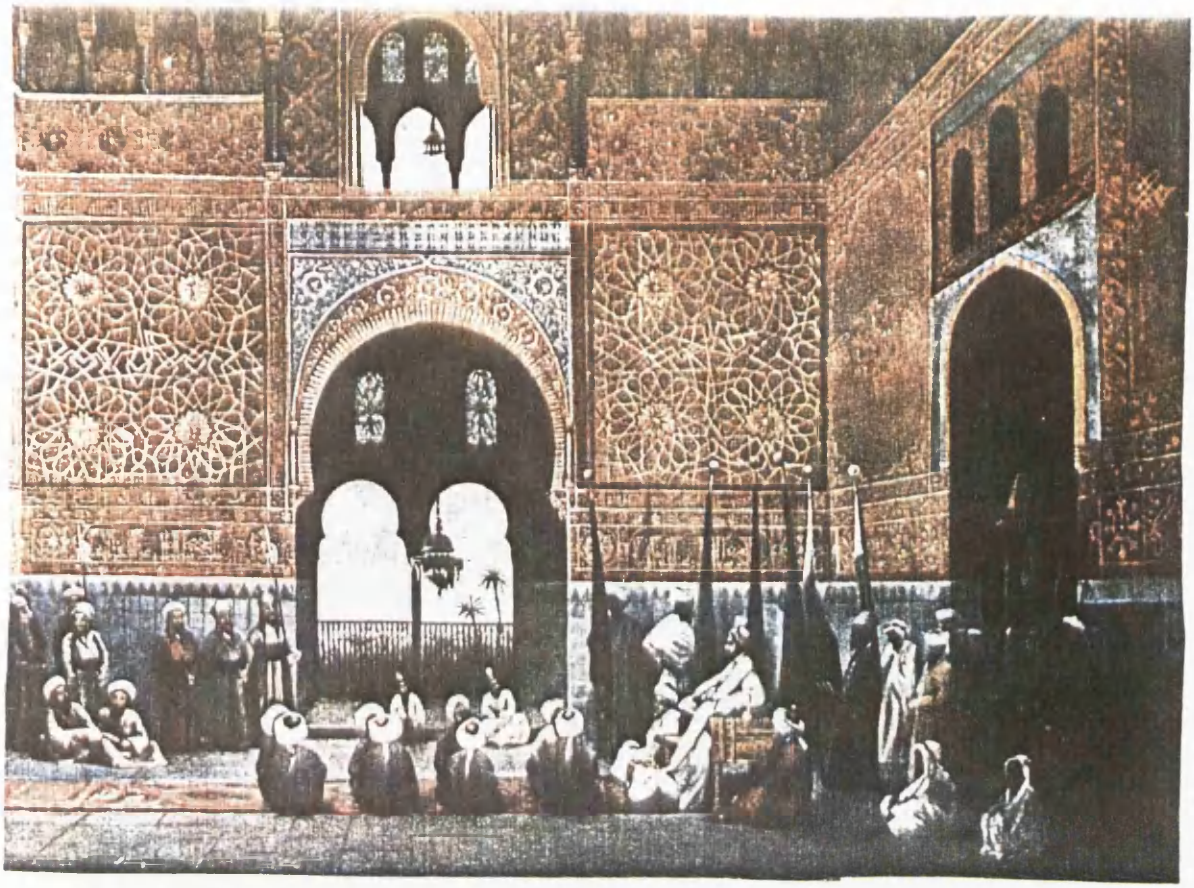


67. Sohrab Sephri: *Untitled.*

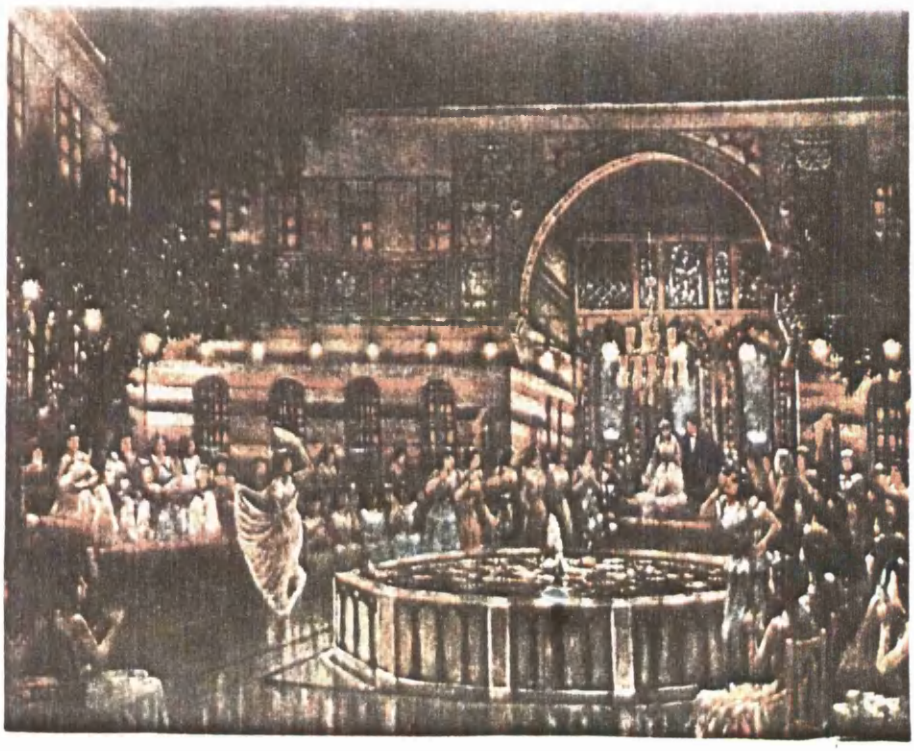
68. Sadek Tabrizi: *Untitled.*

69. Naser Ovisi:
Two Girls and Tambourine.

70. Jazeh Tabataba'i:
Untitled.



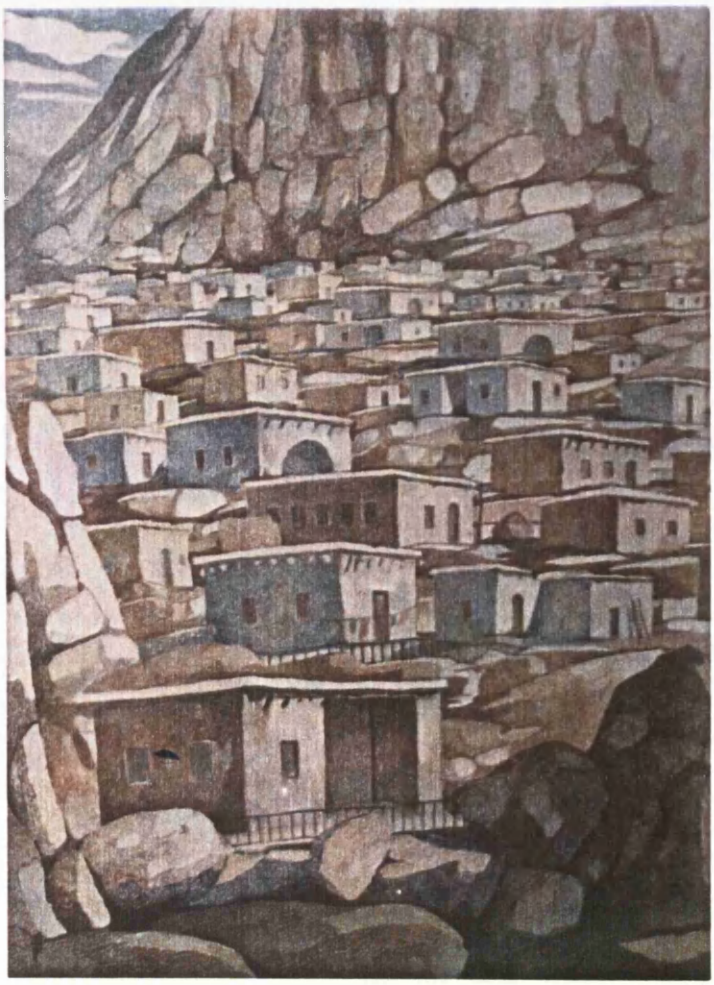
71. Tawfiq Tariq: *The Caliph's Majlis.*



72. Sa'id Tahseen: *Damascene Wedding.*

72. Mahmoud Jalal:
Girl with a Jar.

74. Nasir Shoura:
Ma'lula.

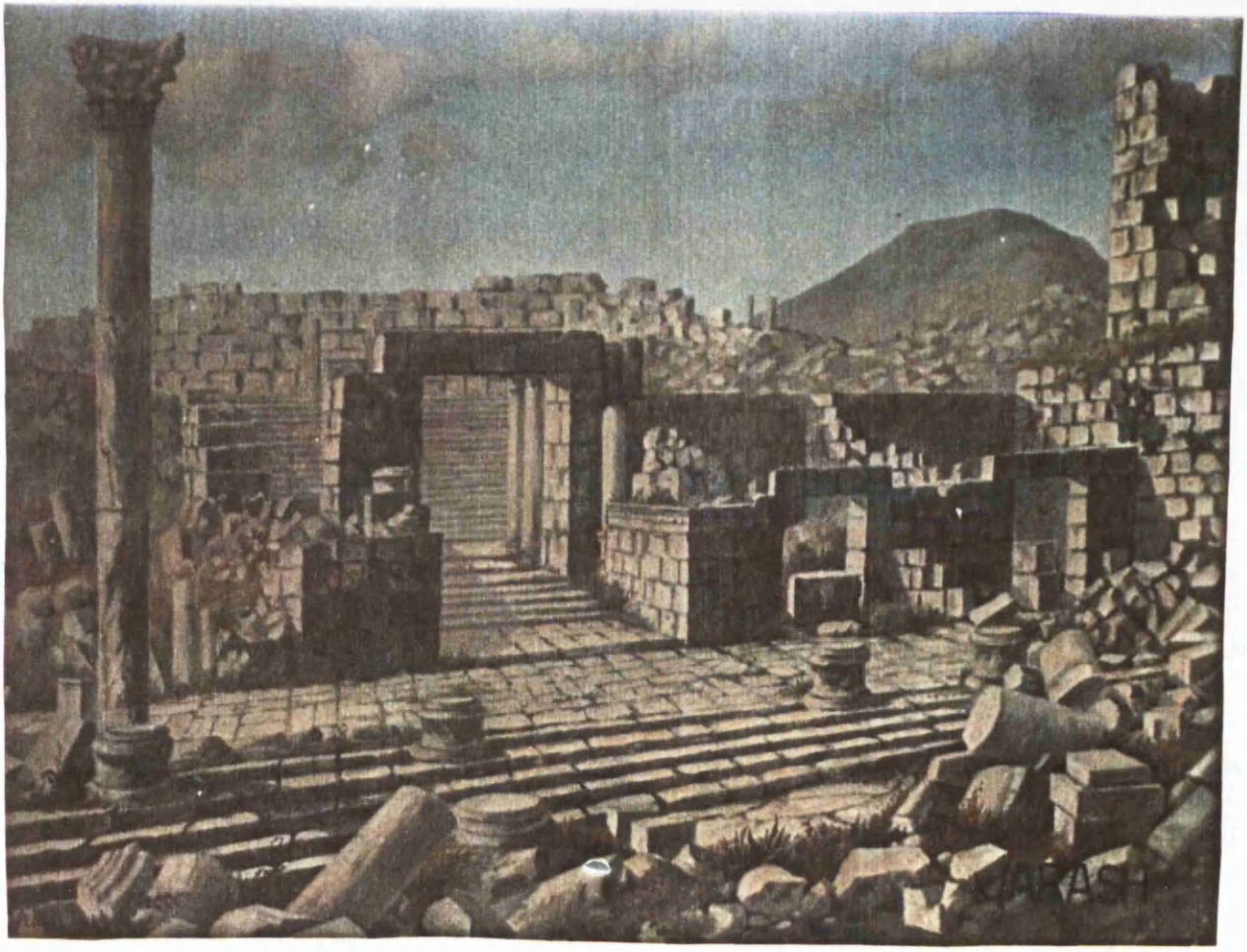


75. Fateh Moudarres: *Christ the Child of Palestine*.

76. Loua'i Kayali: *For the Cause*.

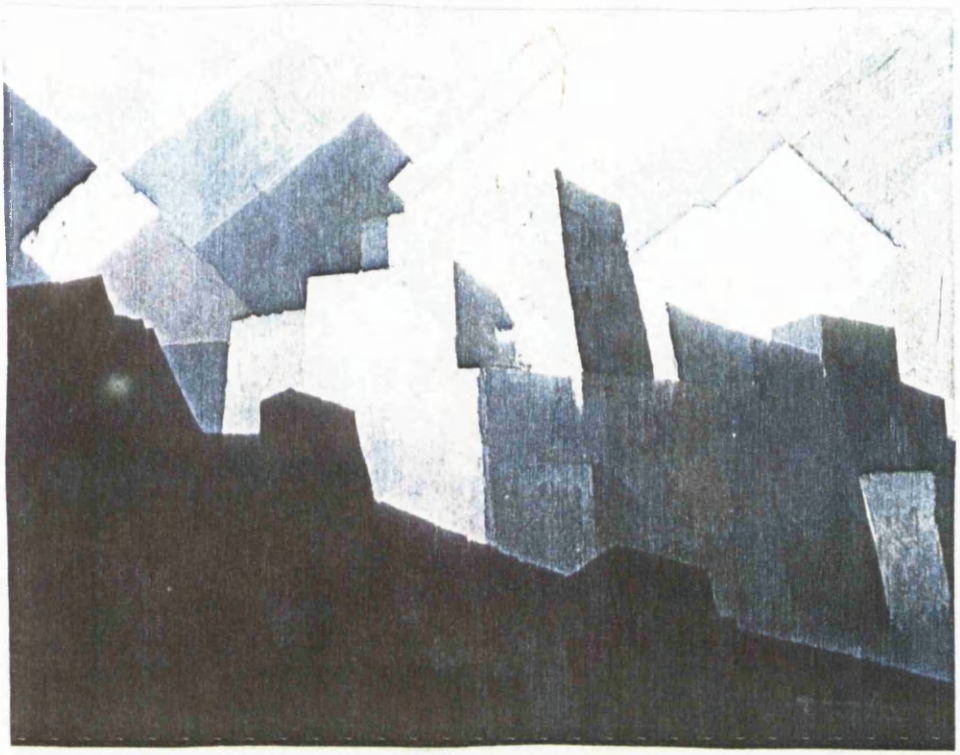
77. Sami Burhan: *Unity*.

78. Ziaeddin Suleiman: *Amman.*



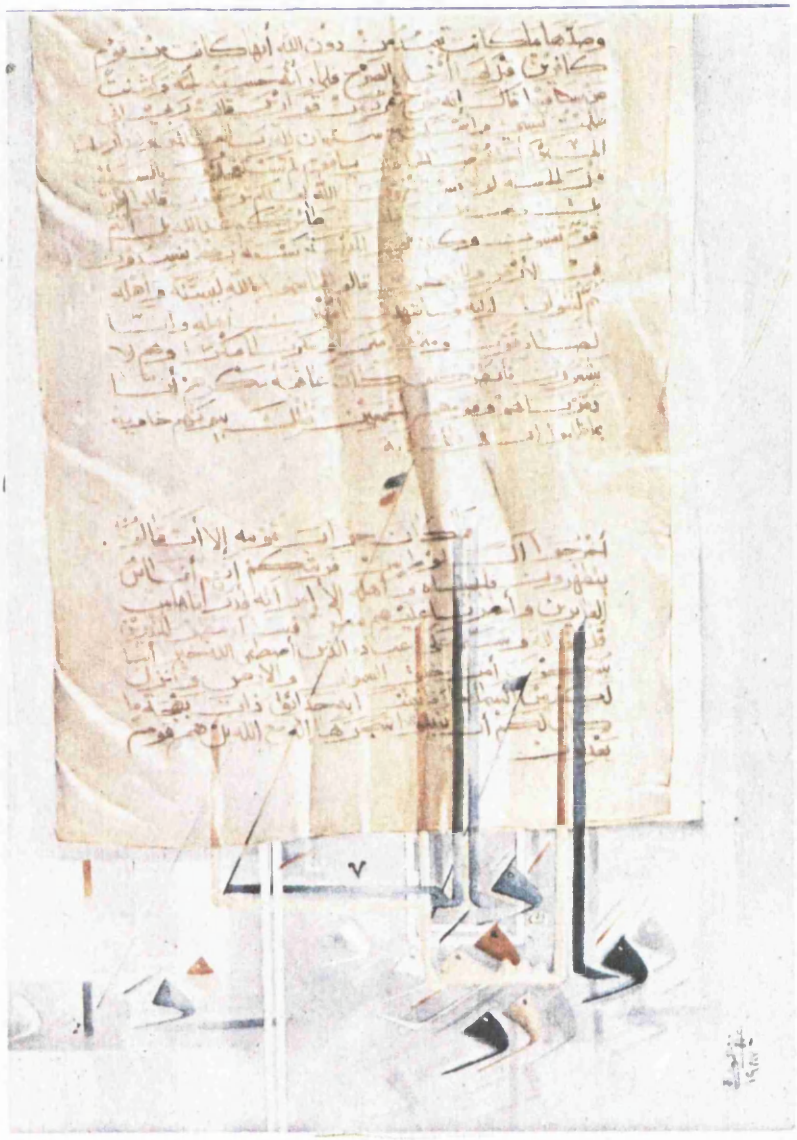
79. George Aleef: *Jerash.*

80. Rafik Laham: *Petra*.

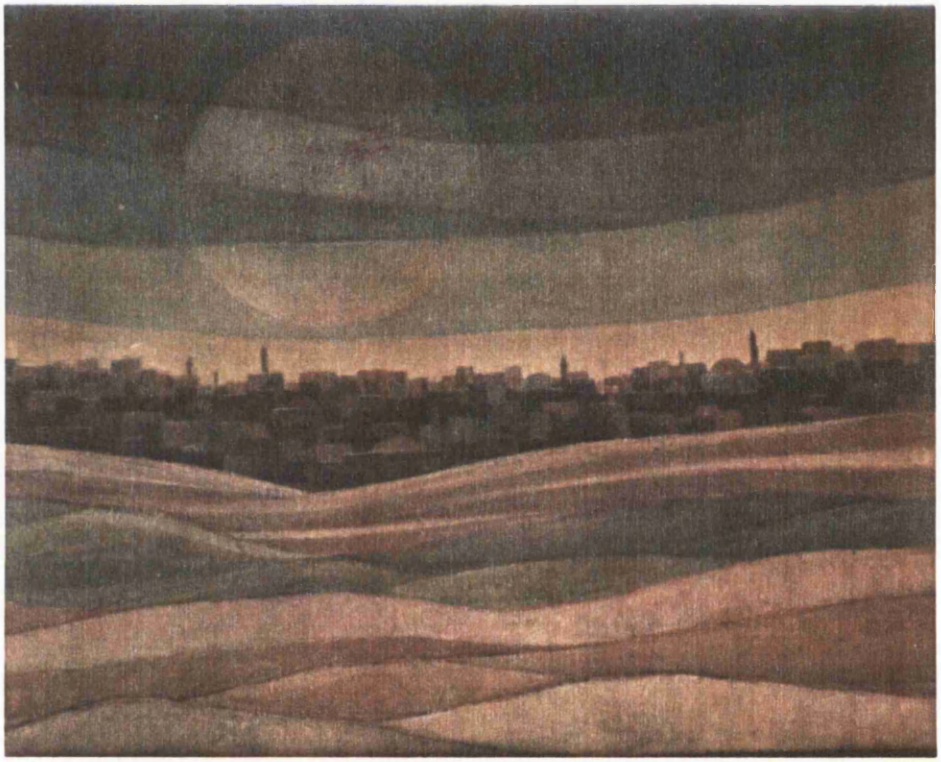


81. Muhanna Durra: *Composition.*

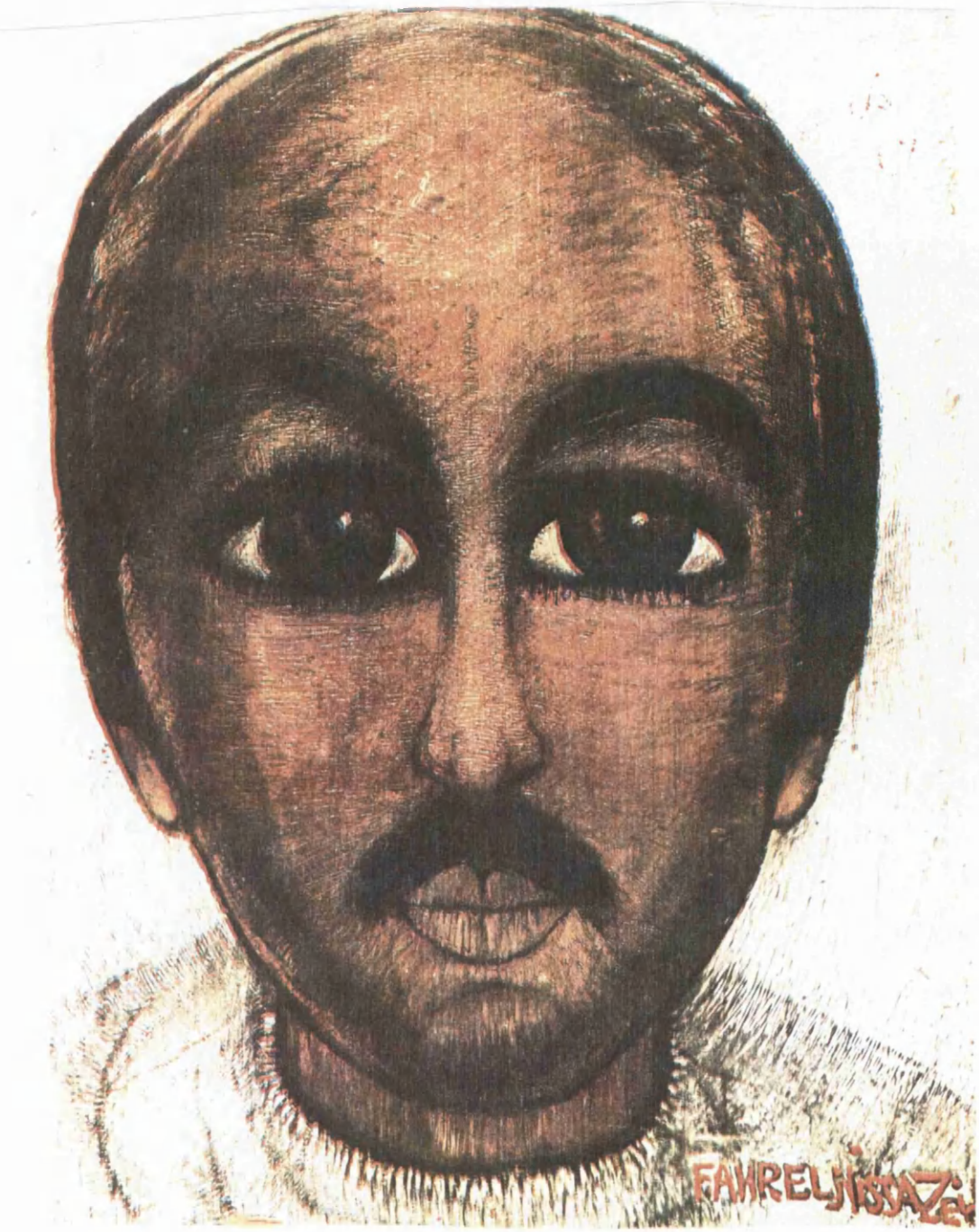
82. Ahmad Nawash: *Opposite Directions.*



83. Aziz Amoura: *Manuscript.*



84. Yasser Duwaik: *Hebron*.



85. Fahrelnissa Zeid: *Portrait.*

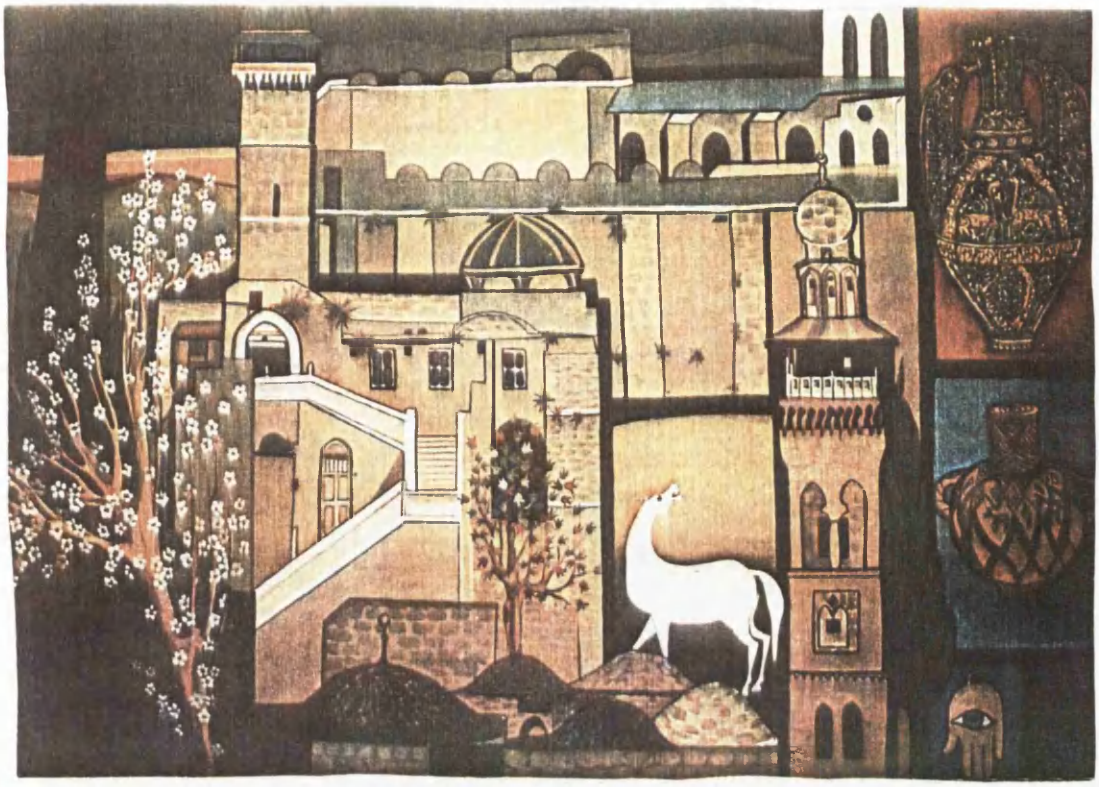
86. Ali Jabri: *Pella I.*

87. Jamal Badran: Decorated Vase.

88. Daoud Zalatimo: *Dome of the Rock*.

89. Ismail Shammout: *Where to?*

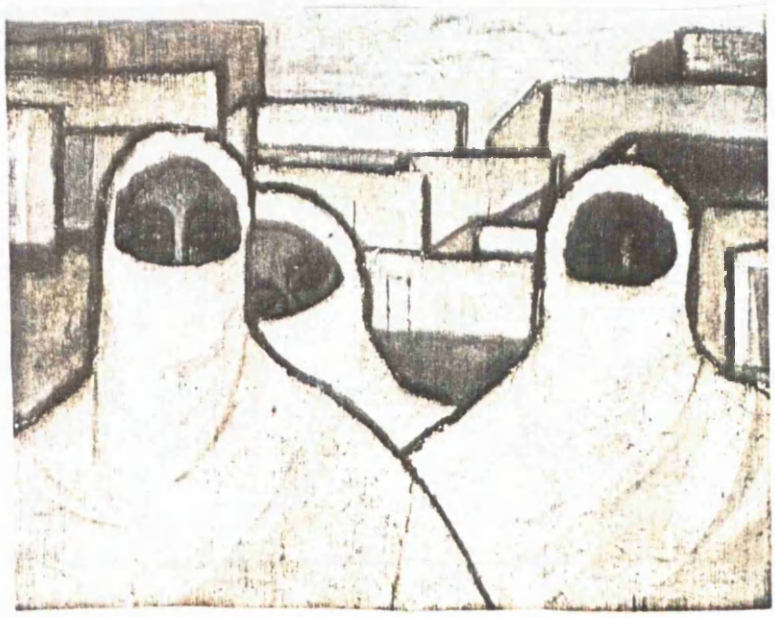
90. Ismail Shammout: *Three Tales.*



91. Tamam Akhal: *From Jerusalem.*

92. Suleiman Mansour: *Woman.*

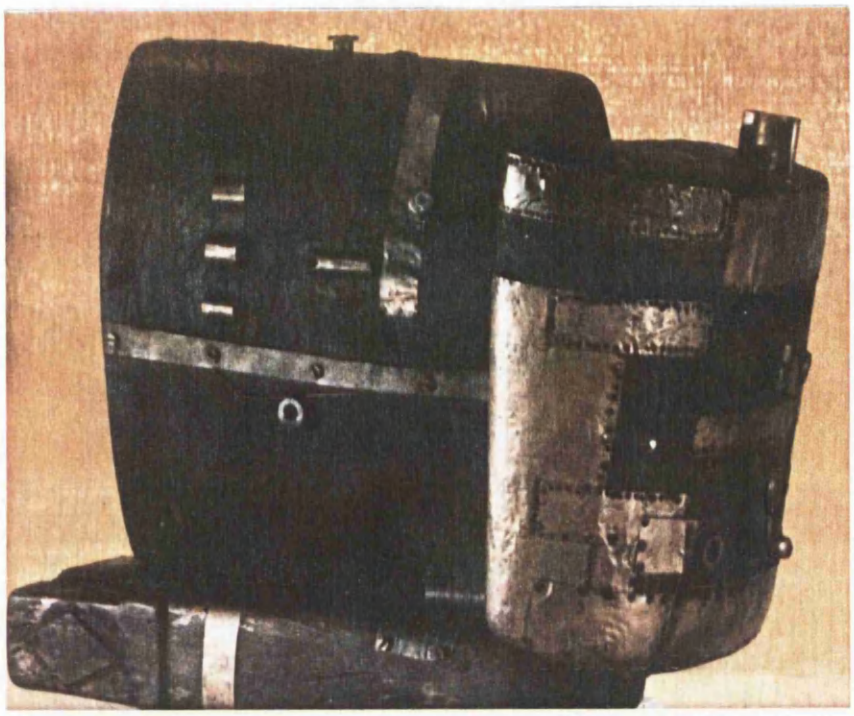
93. Zuhdi Al-Adawi: *Stronger than the Batton.*



94. Bastawi Baghdadi: *Three Mourning Women.*

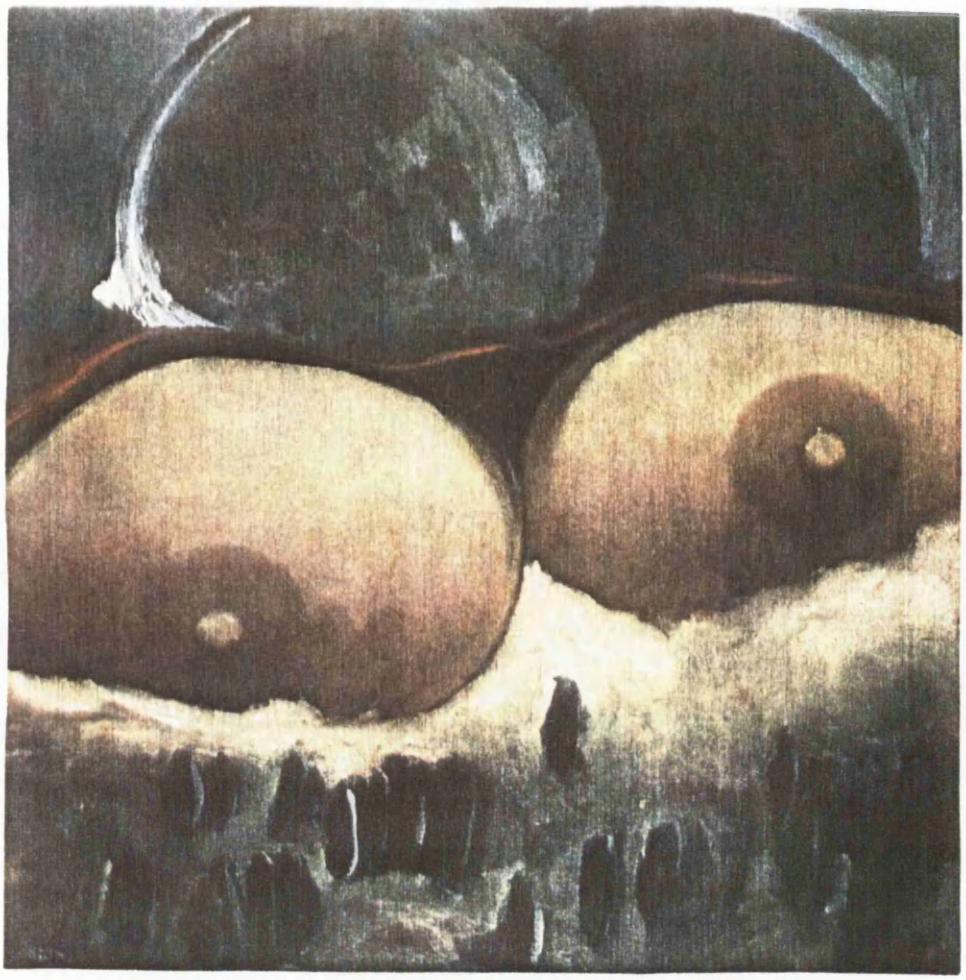
95. Kamala Ibrahim: *Loneliness.*

96. Ibrahim el-Awaam: *Letters.*

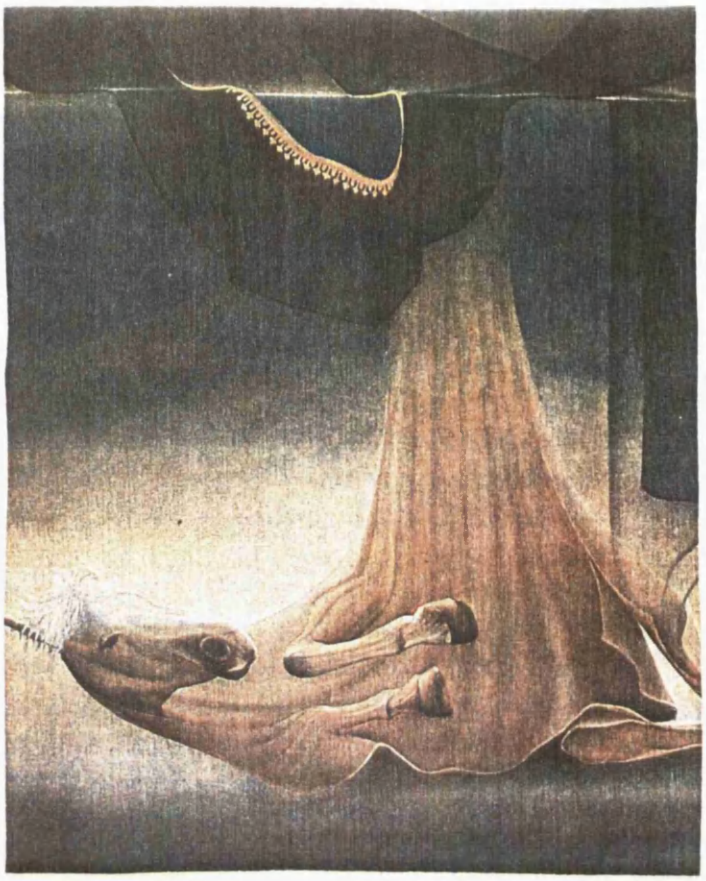


97. Ahmad Ibrahim Abdul Aal: *A Body in Space*.

98. Mojab Dossari: *Women Washing*.



99. Khazaal Al-Qaffas: *Mother Earth.*

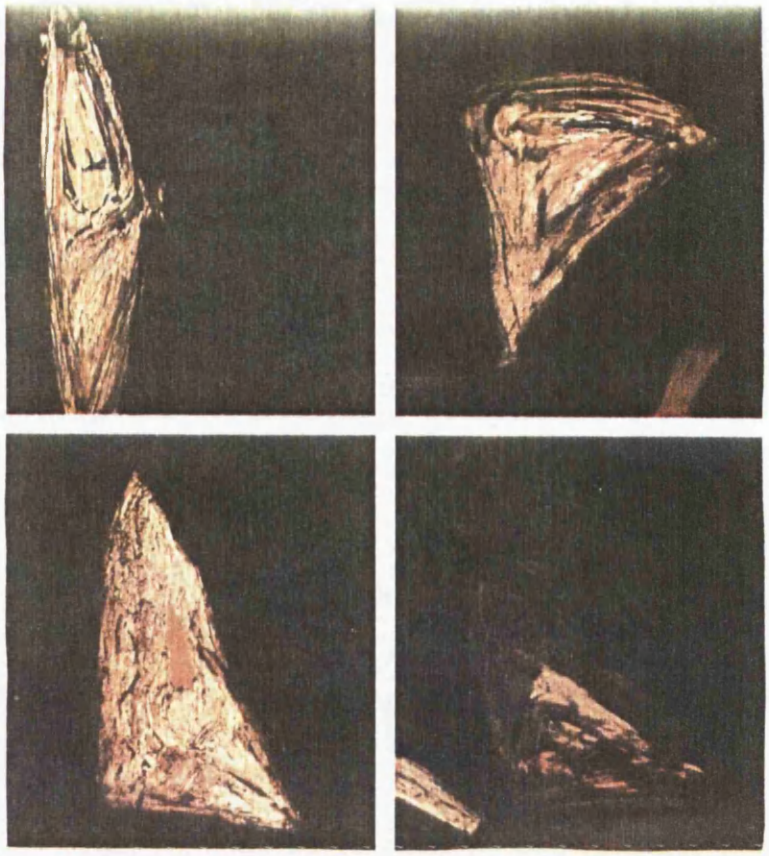


100. Abdul Rasul Salman: *Untitled.*

101. Safeya Binzagr: *The Late King Faisal in a Najdi Dance.*

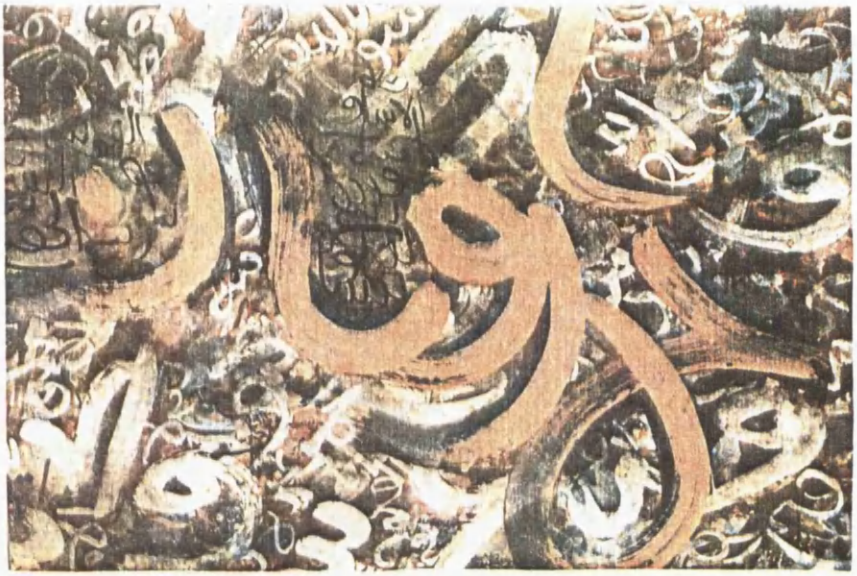
102. Abdul Halim Rawdi: *Folkloric Dance.*

103. Abdel Aziz Ashour: *Composition No. 1.*



104. Faisal Samra: *Prayer*.

105. Jassem Zeini: *Characters From Qatar*.



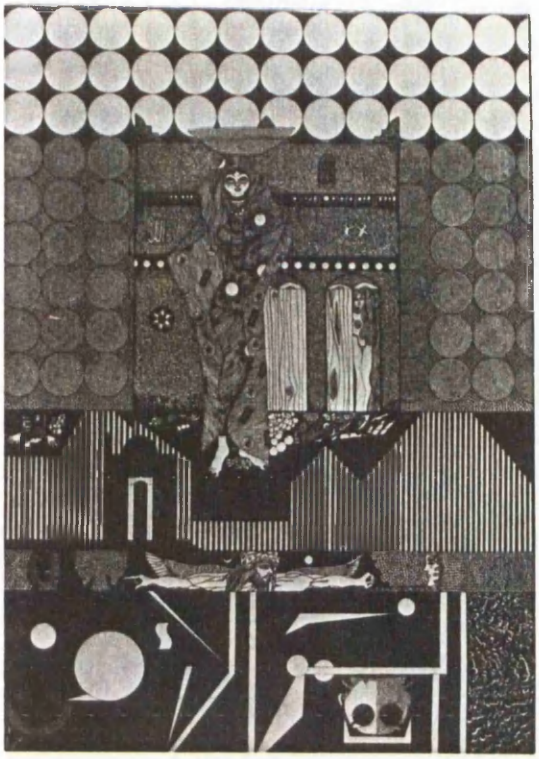
106. Ali Hassan Algabir: *Abstraction of Letters.*

107. Yussef Ahmad: *Untitled.*

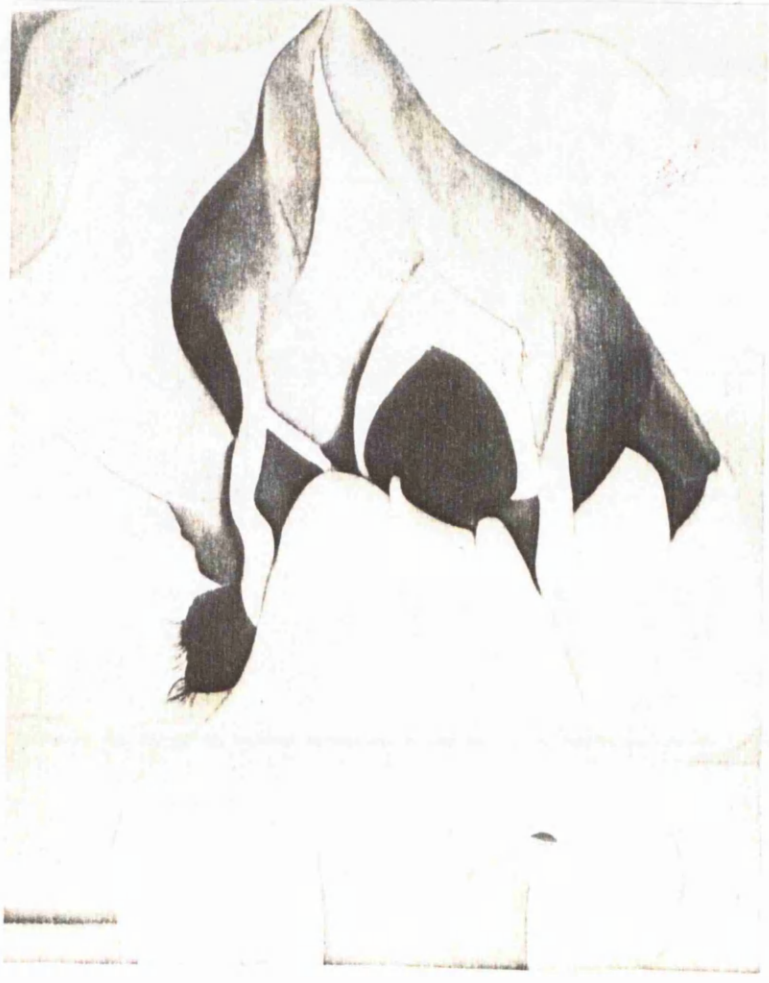
108. Abdulla Al-Muharraq: *A Woman Cleaning Rice Before Cooking It.*

109. Nasser Youssef: *The Two Sisters.*

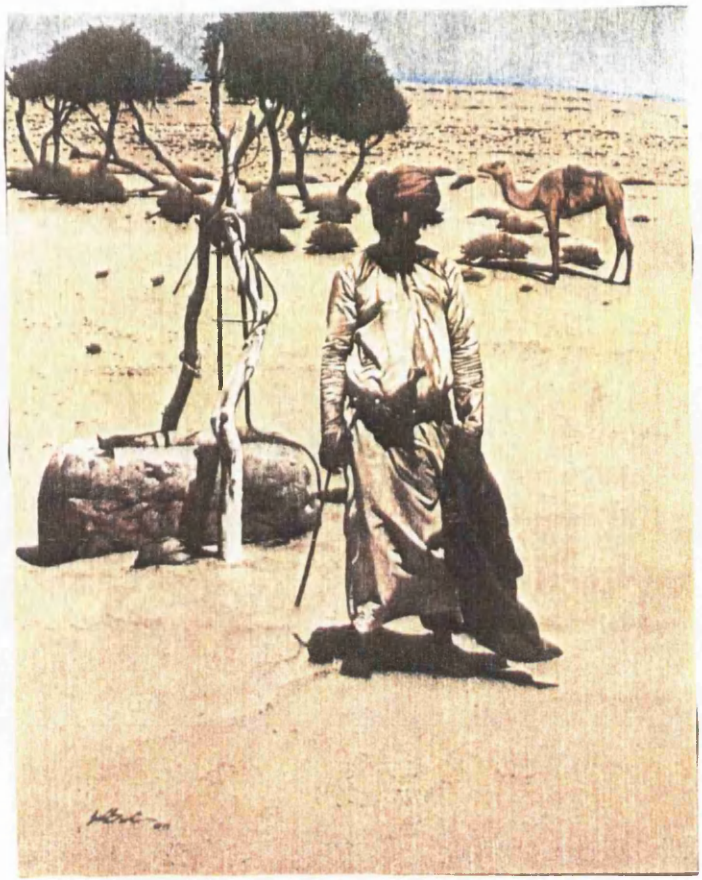
110. Muhammad Yousif: *The Door.*



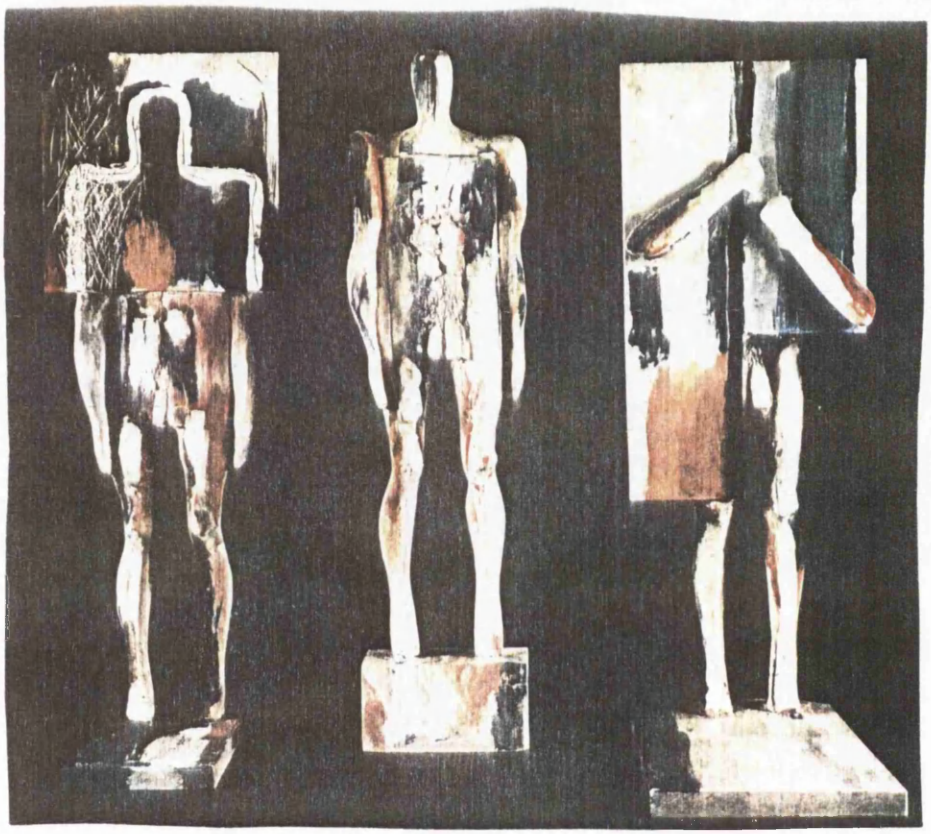
111. Fuad al-Futaih: *Untitled.*



112. Sabiha Bishara: *Flower of My Life.*

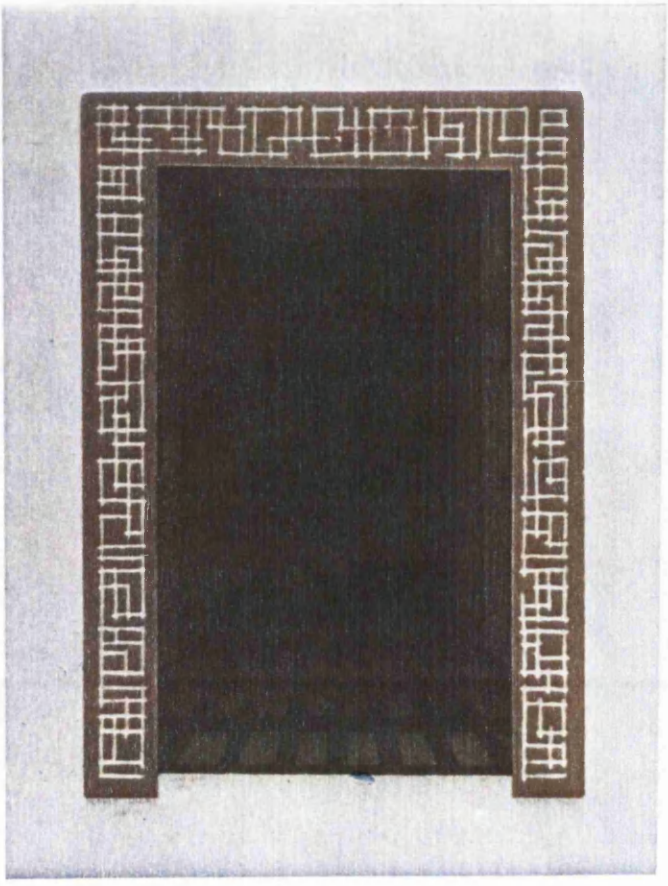


113. Terence J. Gilbert: *Standing by a Well - Wahiba Sands Oman.*



114. Ismail Fattah: *Three Situations.*

115. Hamid Nada: *Folklore*.



116. Minhatallah Hilmi: *The Corridor*.

117. Ahmed Cherkaoui: *Untitled.*

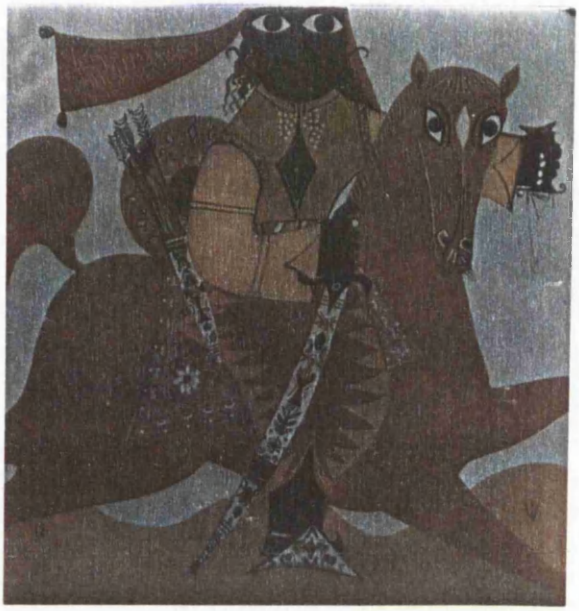
118. Abdel Basit Khatim: *Untitled.*

119. Fahrelnissa Zeid: *The Bath*.

120. Yalçin Gökçebag: *The Game*.

121. Suad Attar: *Blue Paradise*.

122. Suraya al-Baqsami: *A Cemetry from the East*.



123. Rafic Charaf: *ʿAntar*.

124. Rafic Charaf: *Amulet*.

125. Khallid Asram: *Untitled.*

126. Nuri Abaç: *The Shepard.*

127. Ashour Messlhi (Wissa Wassef School): *Leafless Tree*.

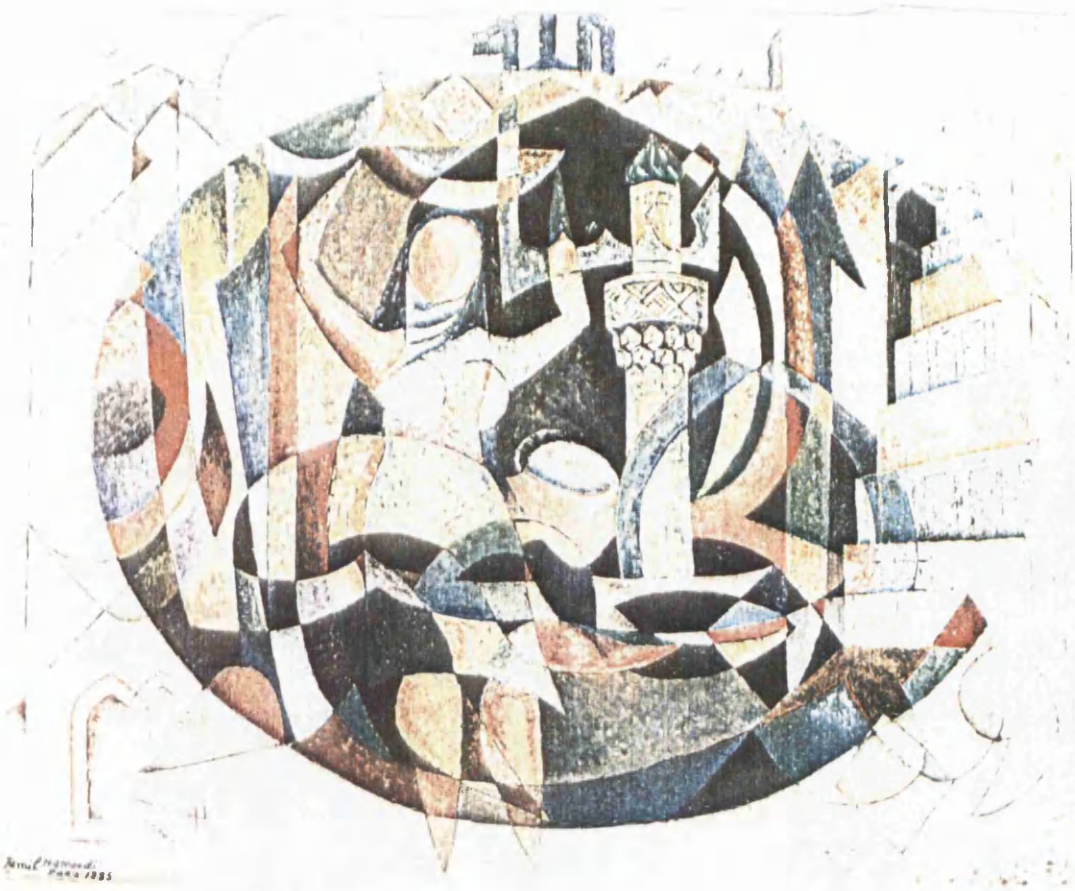
128. Jawad Sallim: *Henna Night.*

129. Jawad Salim: *Monument of Freedom.*

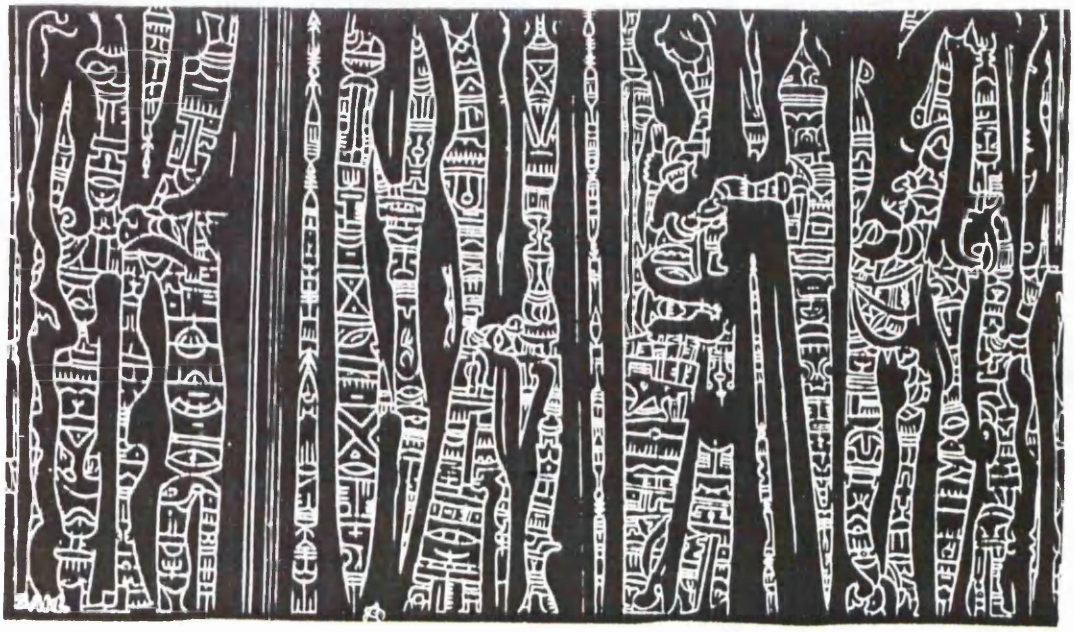
130. Madiha Omar: *Alif.*

131. Jamil Hamoudi: *Homage to Abdul ʿAlaʿal-Maʿari.*

132. Jamil Hamoudi: *Ramadan*.



133. Jamil Hamoudi: *Man and Civilization*.



134. Saïd Akl: *Writing*.

135. Saïd Akl: *Arcade*.

136. Wajih Nahle: *The Warrior.*

137. Wajih Nahle: *Untitled.*

138. Osman Waqialla: *Untitled.*

139. Ibrahim al-Salahi: *Bedouin Life.*

140. Ahmad Mohamed Shibrain: *Untitled.*

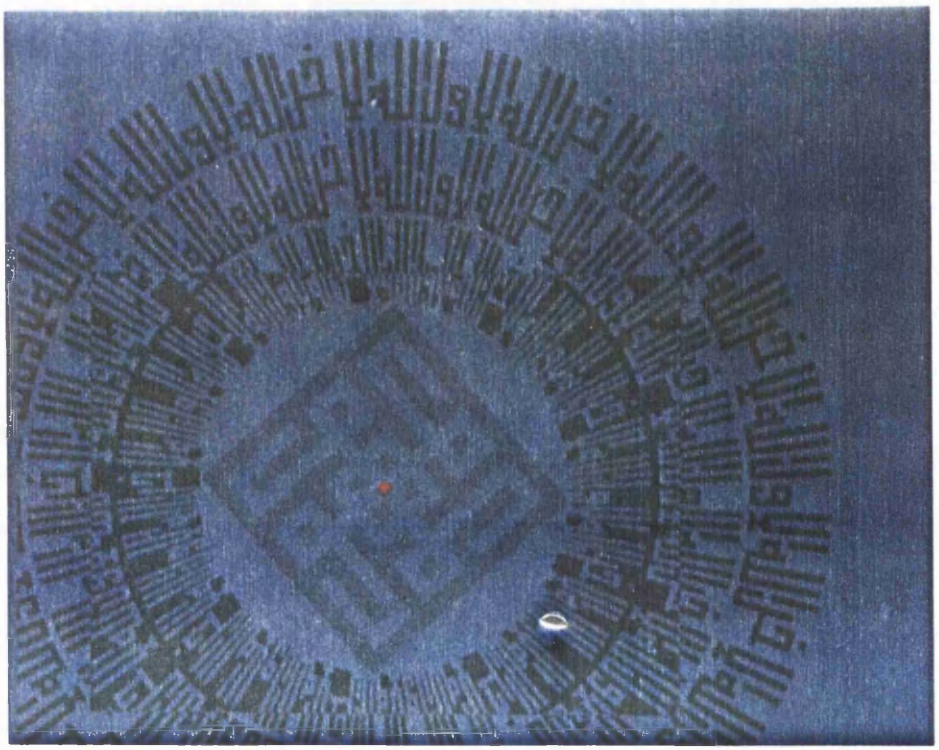
141. Hosseyn Zenderoudi: *Homage to a Master Calligrapher.*

142. Adnan Turani: *Abstract*.

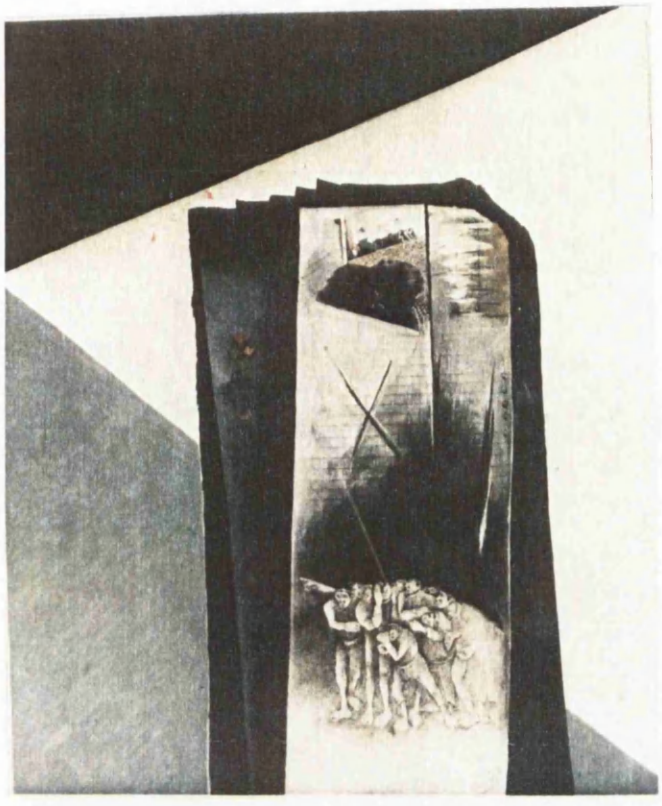
143. Erol Akyavaş: *Passion of al-Hallaj*.

144. Burhan Doğançay: *Homage to Calligraphy.*

145. Abdul Rasul Salman: *Allāhu Akbar*.



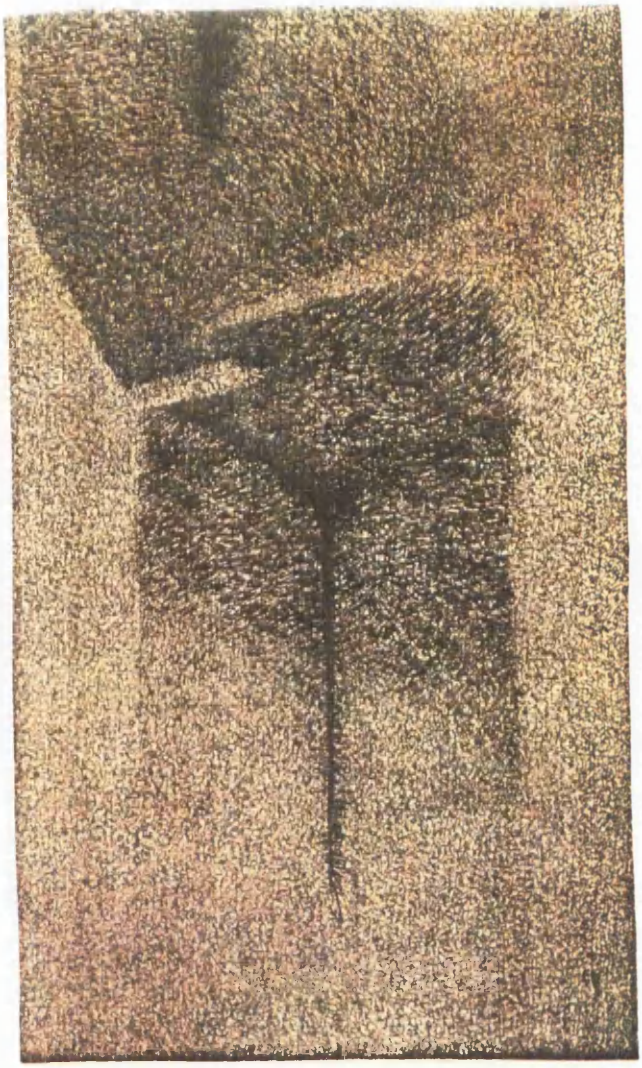
146. Kamal Boullata: *Huwa Allāh al-Awal, Allāh al-Akbar*.



147. Adnan Yahya: *Had I not Survived.*

148. Etel Adnan: *Dedication to al-Bayati.*

149. Rafik Laham: *Untitled.*

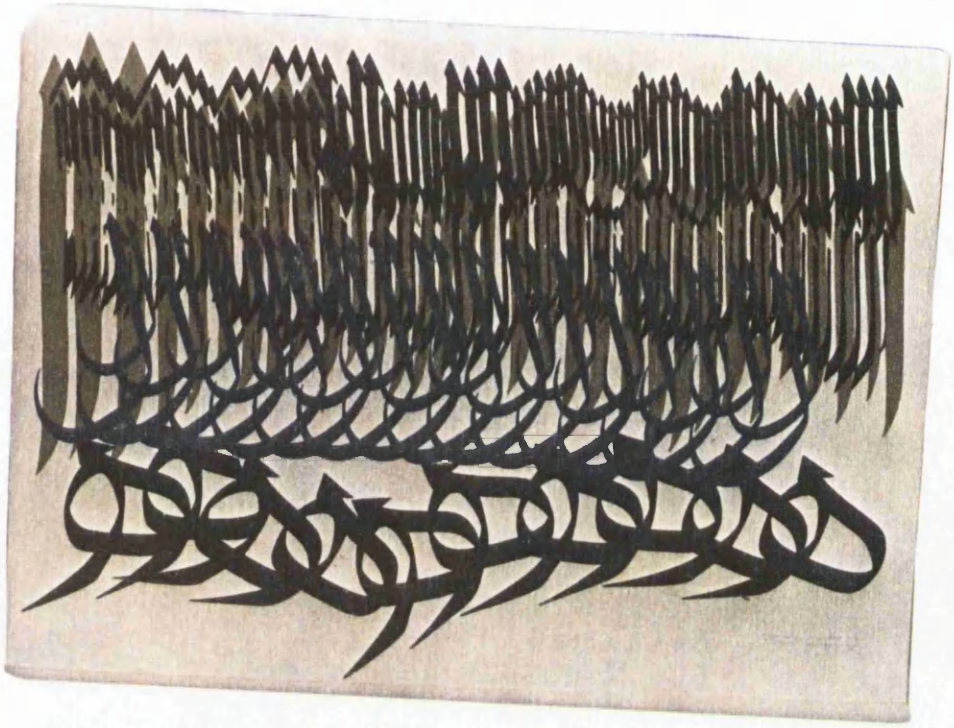


150. Yusuf Ahmad: *Calligraphic Movement.*

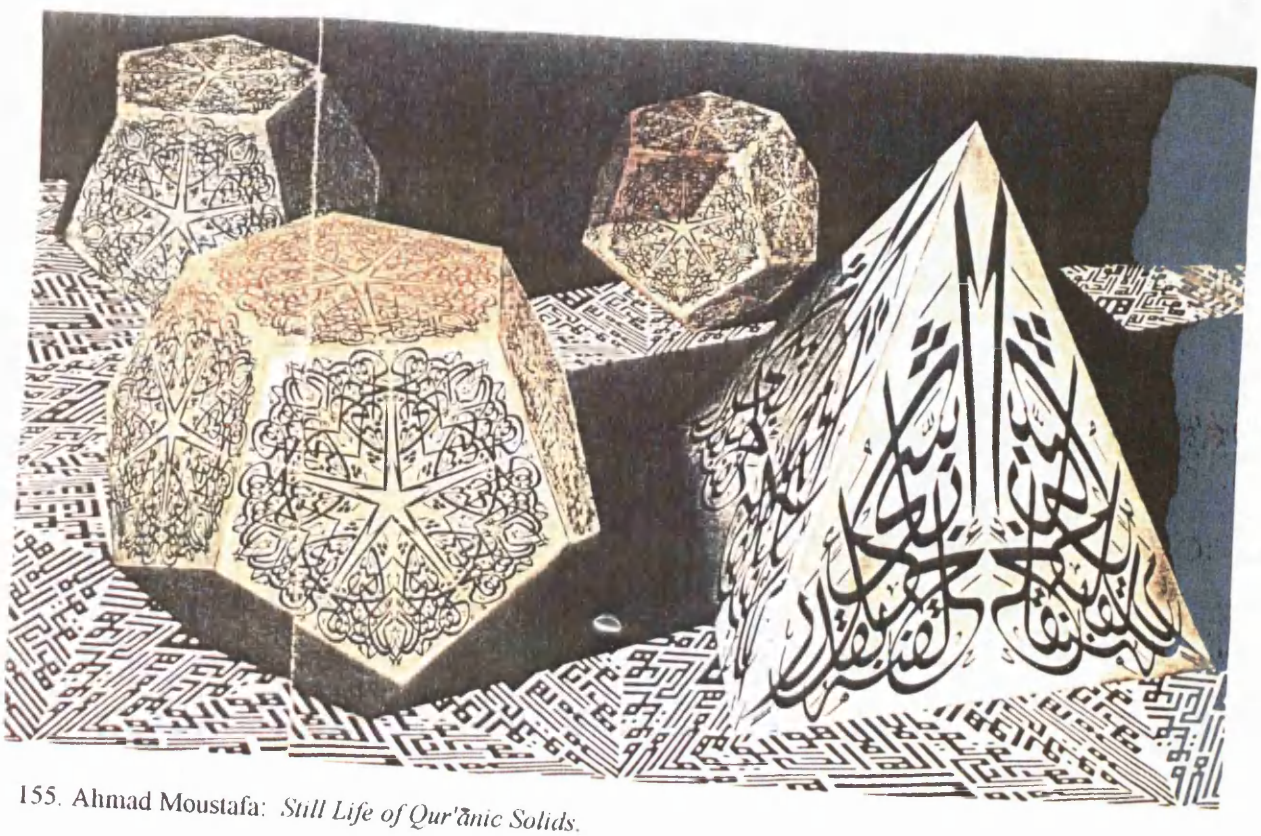
151. Khairat al-Saleh: *The Creation.*

152. Wajih Nahle: *Āyat al-Kursī.*

153. Wajih Nahle: *Al-Fātiḥa.*



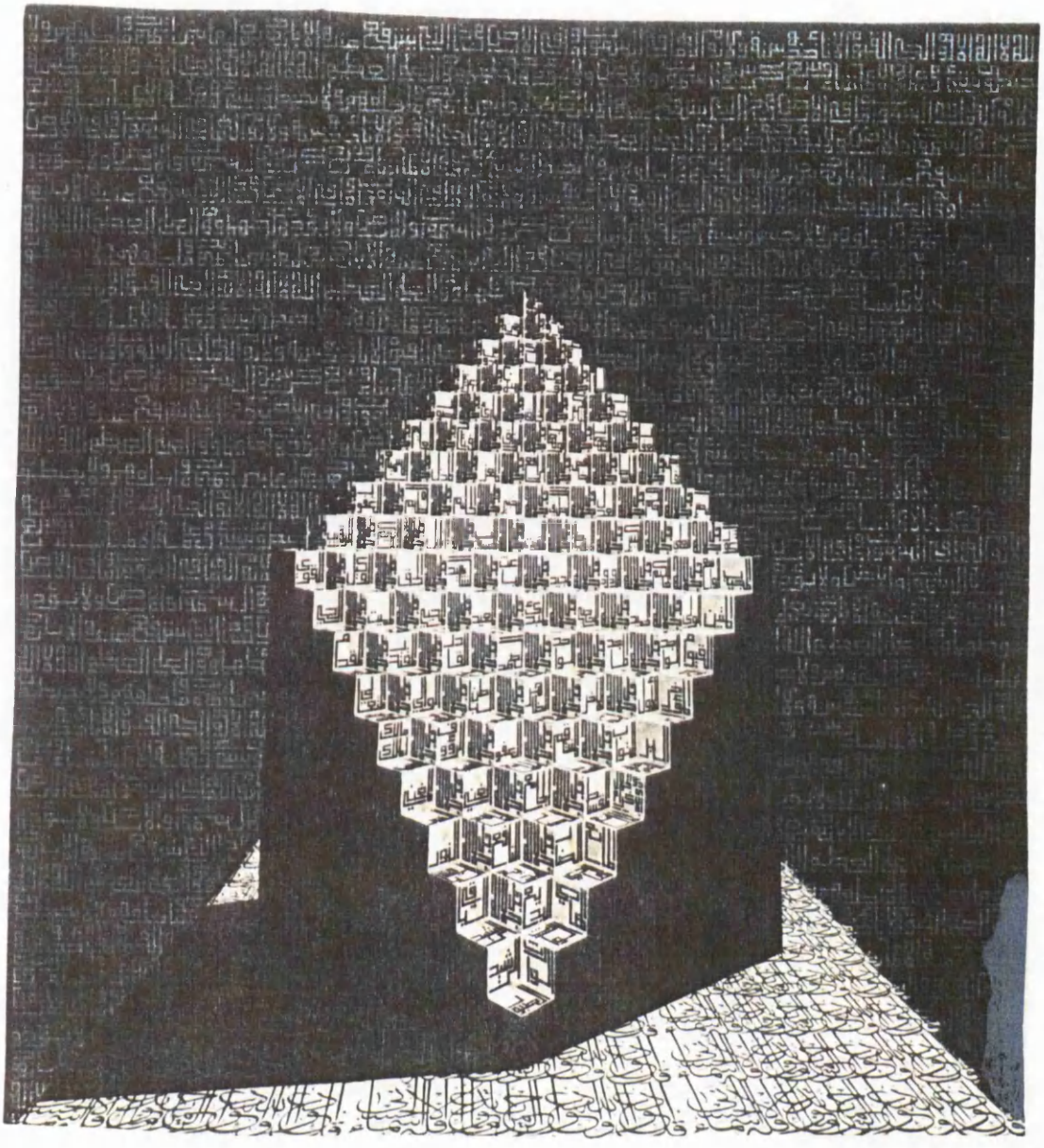
154. Ahmad Moustafa: *Qur'ānic Fugue.*



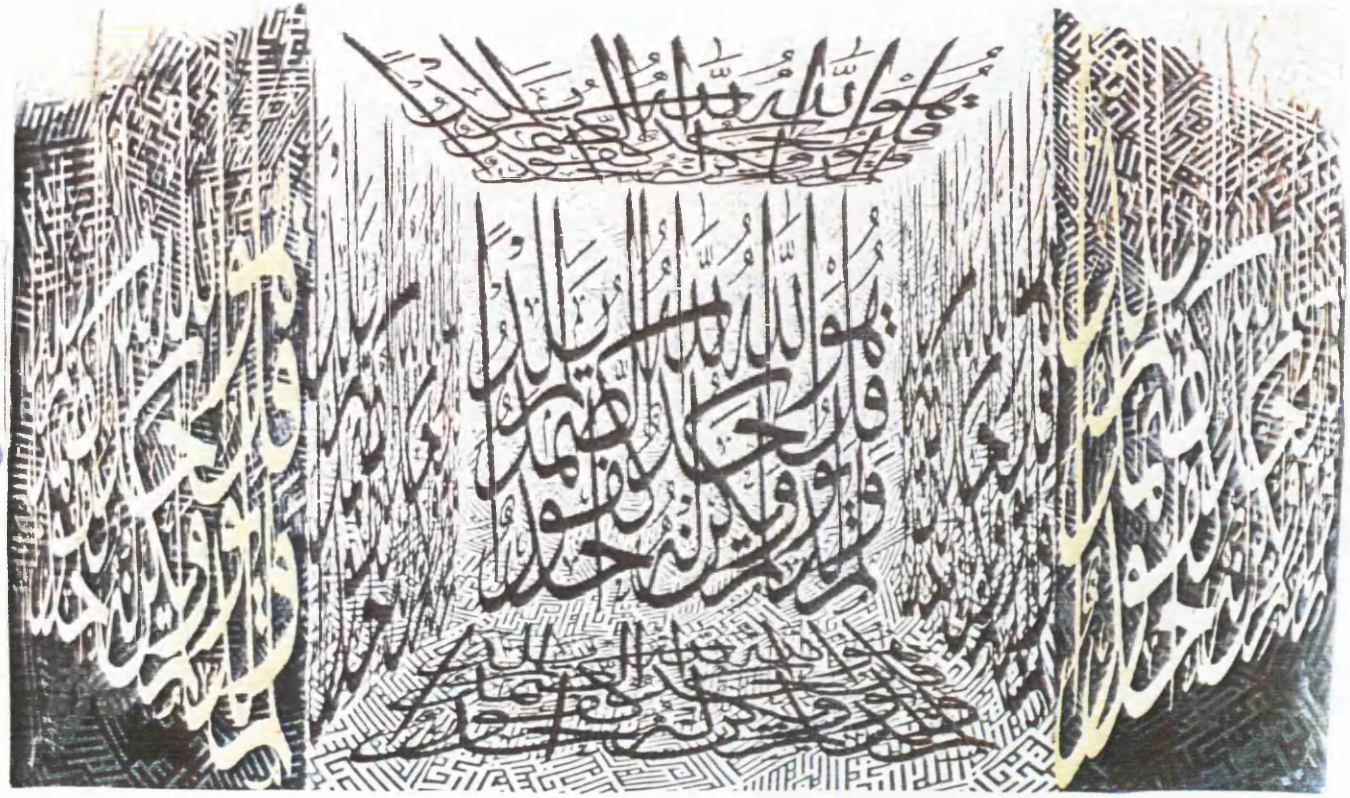
155. Ahmad Moustafa: *Still Life of Qur'ānic Solids.*

156. Ahmad Moustafa: *The Invisible Warriors of Badr*.

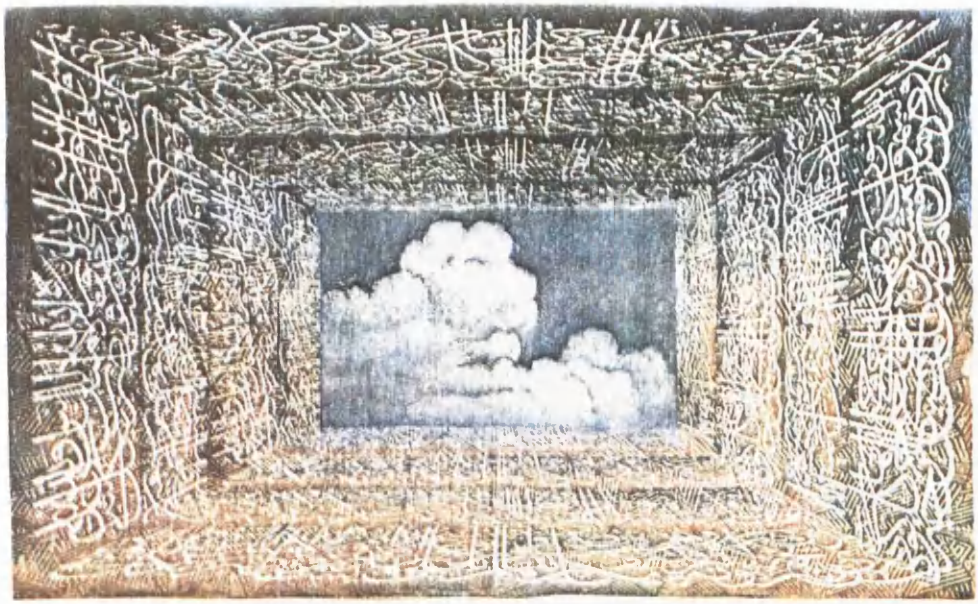
157. Ahmad Moustafa: *Trilogy of the Arab Horse.*



158. Ahmad Moustafa: *The Attributes of Divine Perfection.*



159. Ahmad Moustafa: *Infinite Interior*.



160. Ahmad Moustafa: *God is the Light of Heaven and Earth.*

161. Mahmoud Taha: *Untitled.*

162. Parviz Tanavoli: *Hich*.

163. Etel Adnan: *Allāh*.

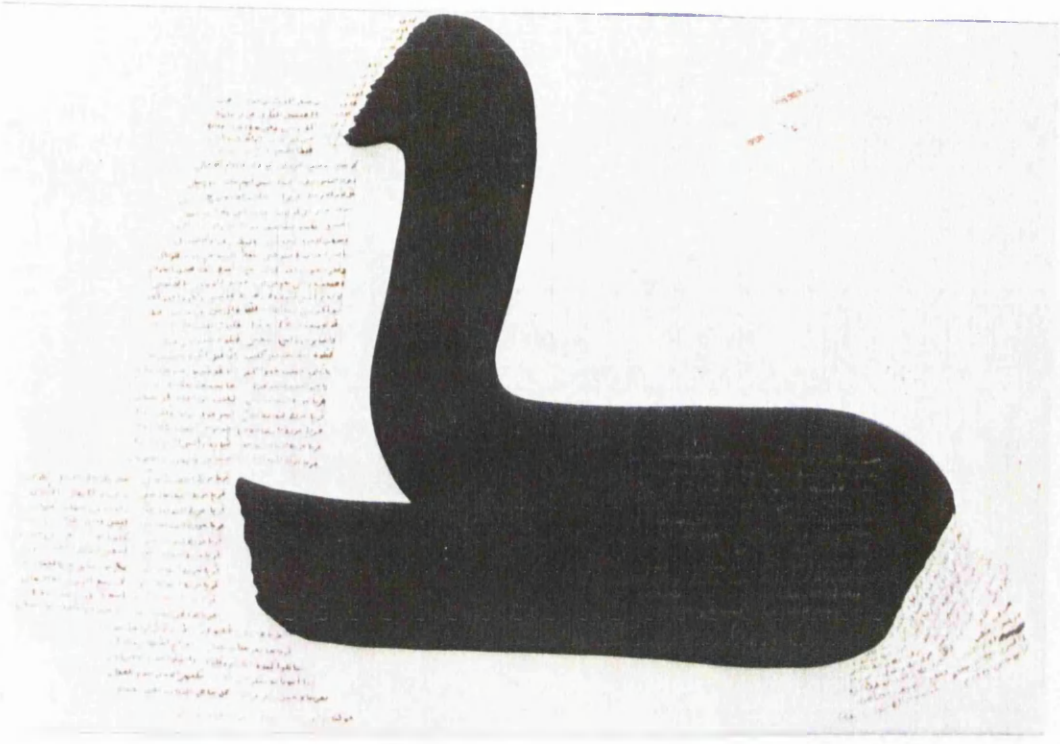
164. Ramzi Moustafa: *Allāh*.

165. Shaker Hassan: *The Wall.*

166. Shaker Hassan: *Subjective Contemplation.*

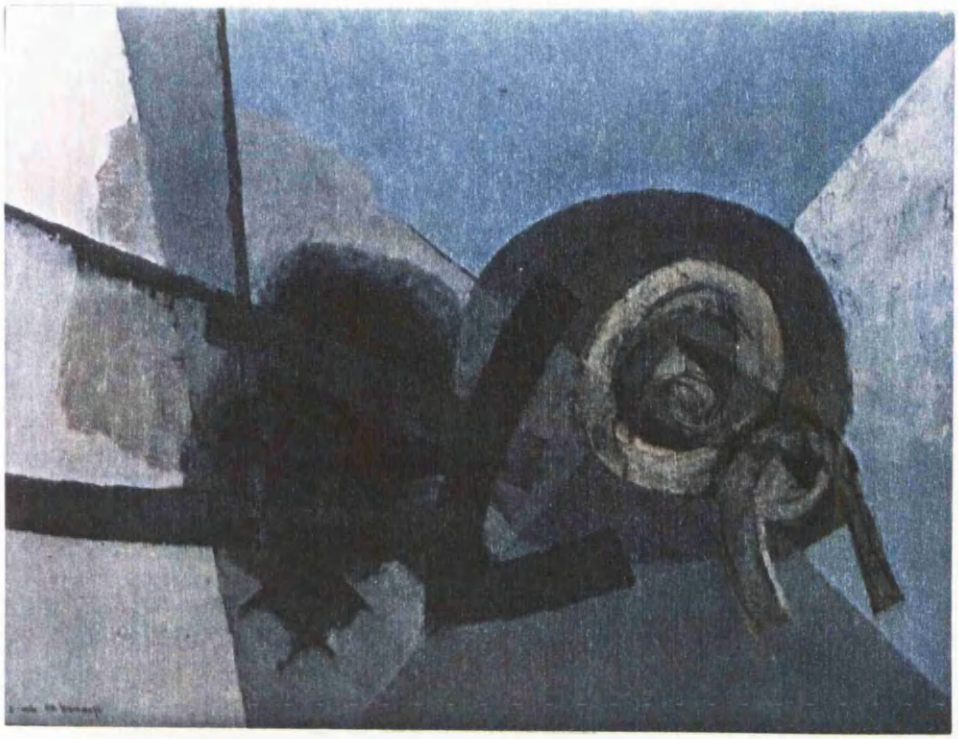
167. Shaker Hassan: Muḥammad.

168. Shaker Hassan: *Subjective Contemplation.*



169. Ali Omar Ermes: *Ta'*

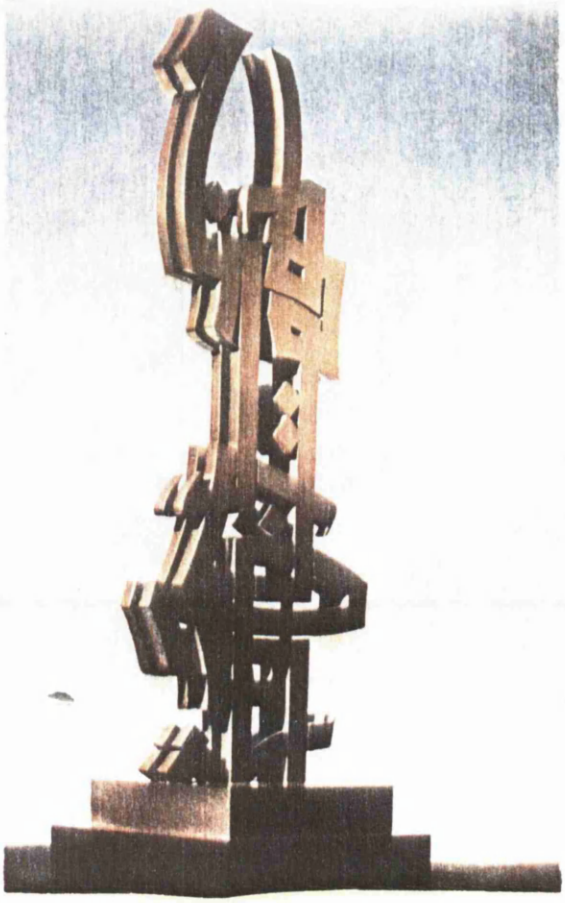
170. Ali Omar Ermes: *A Pattern of Colours.*



171. Mahmoud Hammad: *Calligraphy.*

172. Nja Mahdaoui:

173. Nja Mahdaoui:

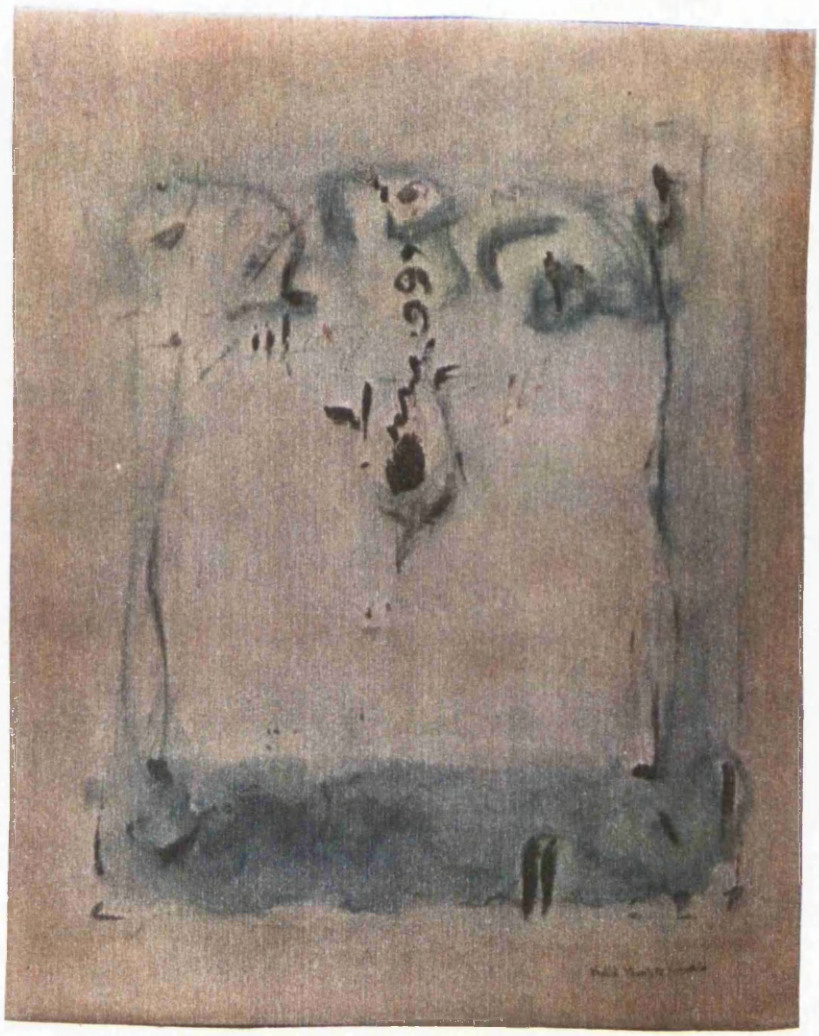


177. Nja Mahdaoui: *Brass Sculpture*.

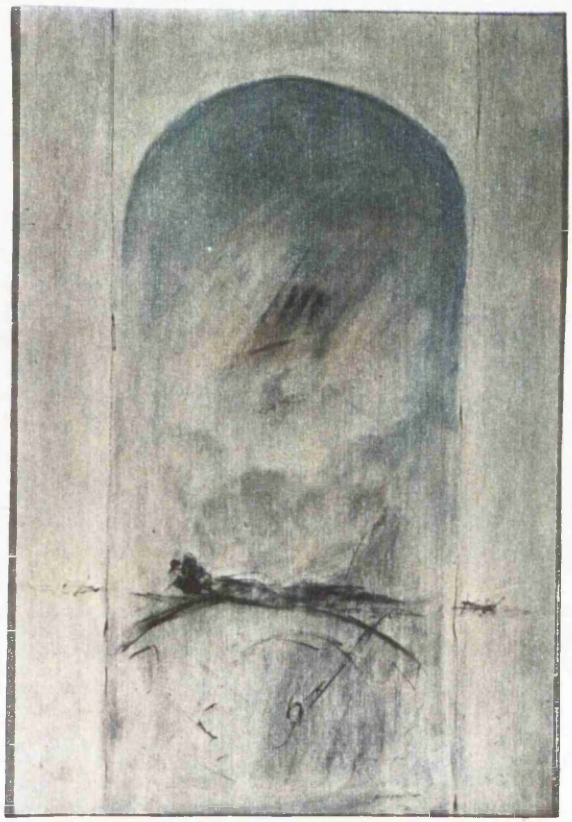
175. Nja Mahdaoui: *Ink on velum.*

176. Khaled Khreis: *Untitled*.

177. Khaled Khreis: *Untitled.*

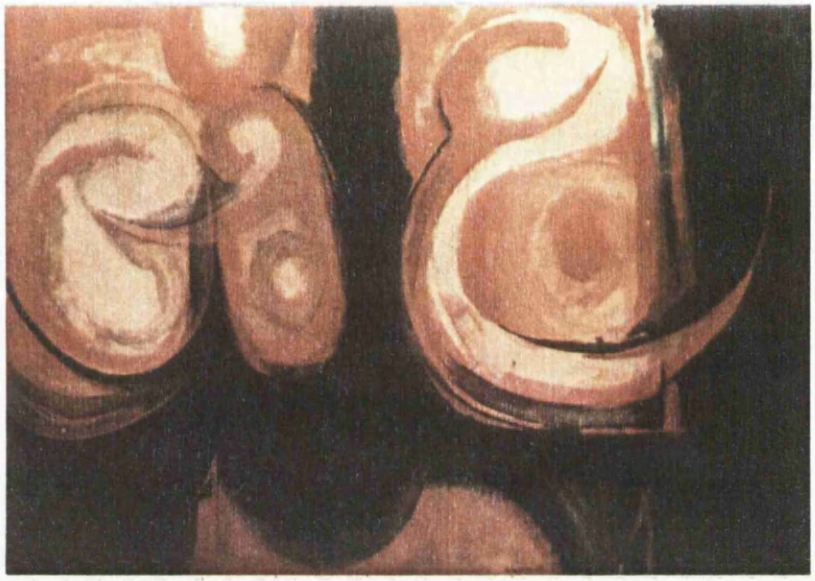


178. Khaled Khreis: *Untitled.*

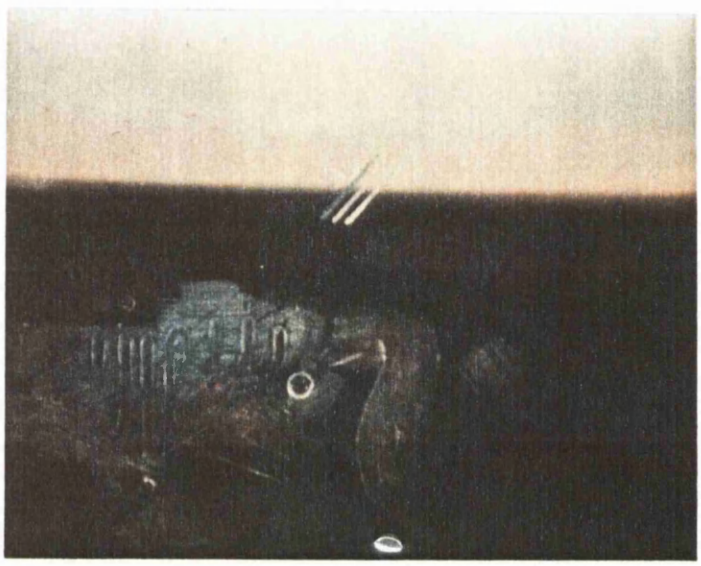


179. Khaled Khreis: *Untitled.*

180. Khaled Khreis: *Untitled.*

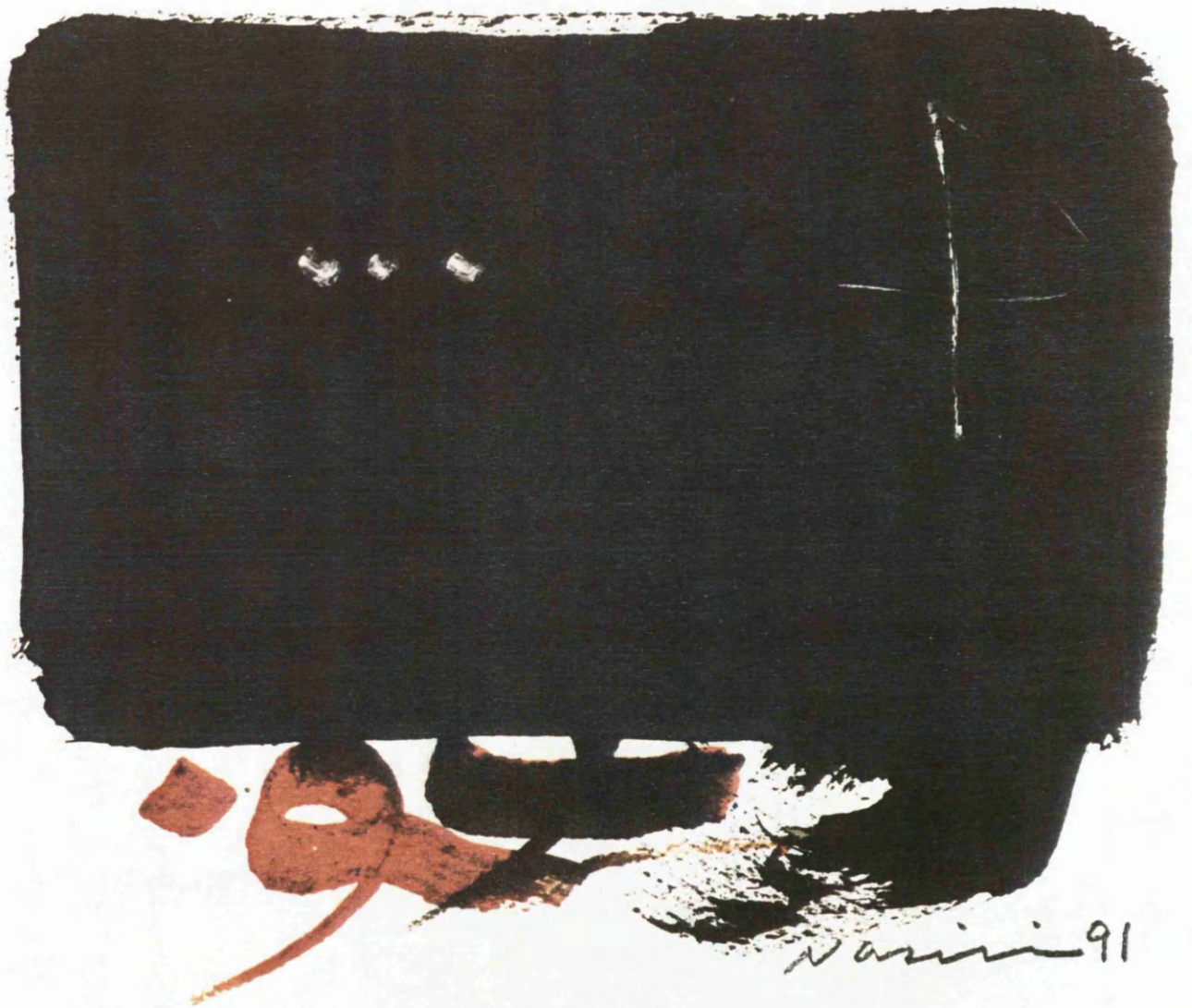


181. Rafa al-Nasiri: *Untitled.*



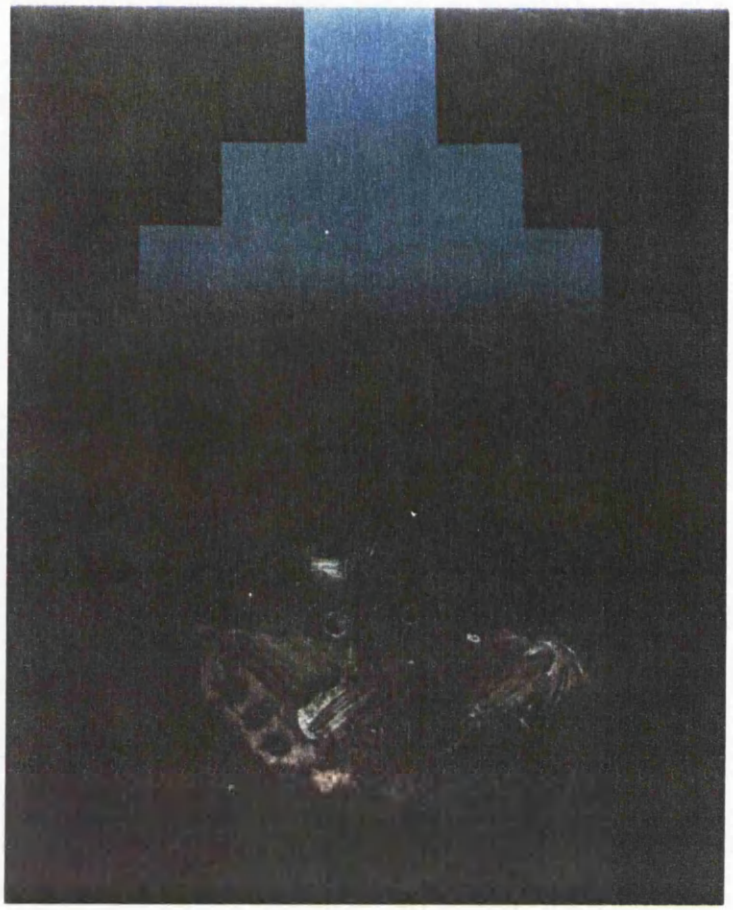
182. Rafa al-Nasiri: *Untitled.*

183. Rafa al-Nasiri: *Untitled.*

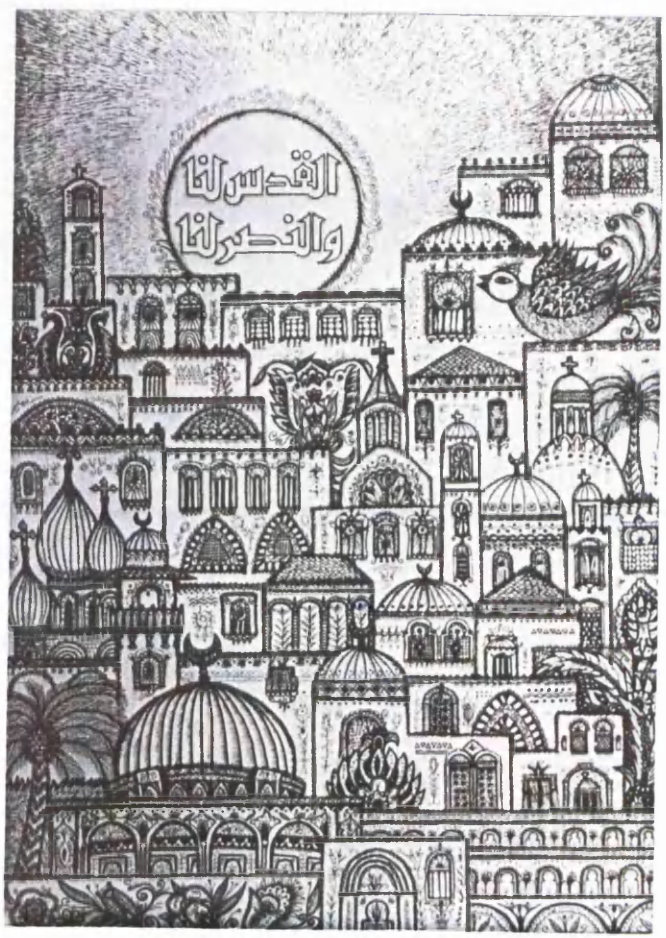


184. Rafa al-Nasiri: *Untitled.*

185. Rafa al-Nasiri:
Qasr al-Ashiq - the Prince.



186. Burhan Karkutli:
Jerusalem.



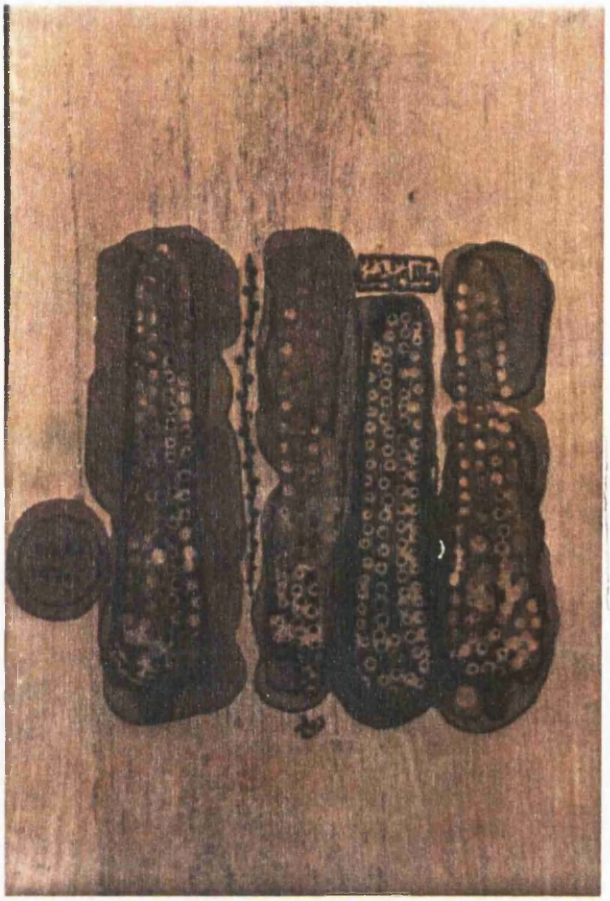
187. Vladimir Tamari: *Jerusalem.*

188. Rachid Koraichi: *Tell al-Za'tar.*

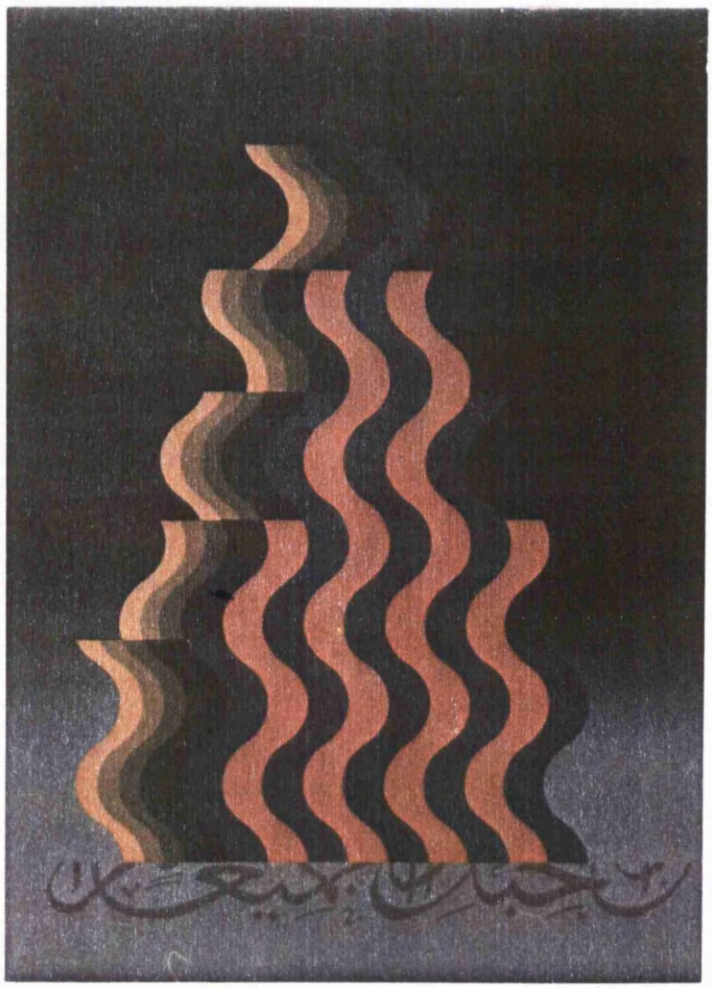
189. Rafik Lahham: *From My Country*.

190. Majdoub Rabbah: *Allah-u-Akbar*.

191. Majdoub Rabbah:
God Multiplies.

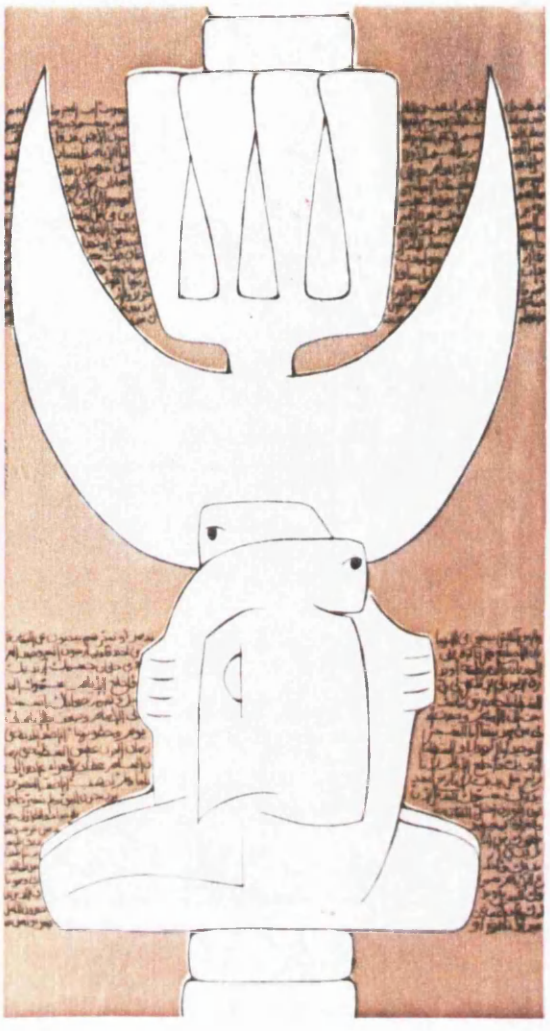


192. Mohamed Melihi:
Untitled.

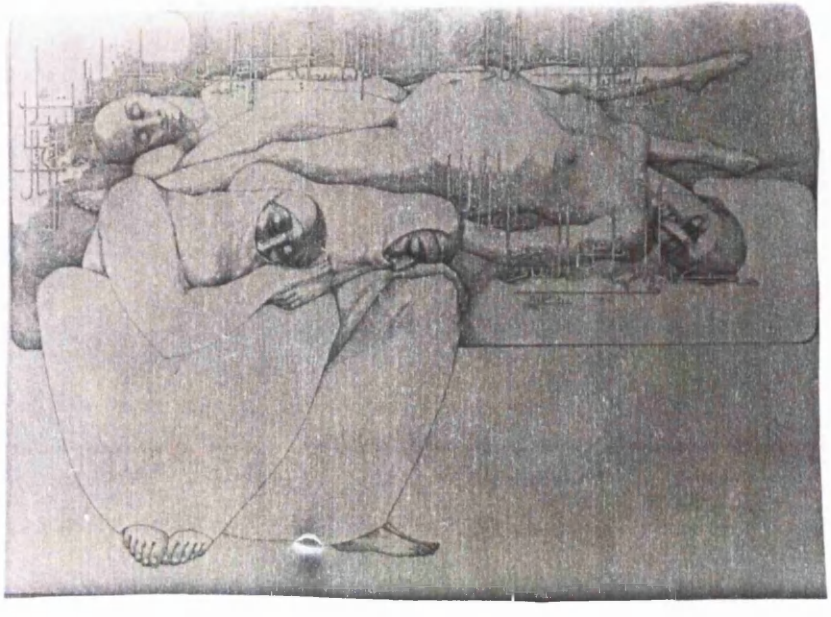


193. Wajih Nahle: *Picture Box.*

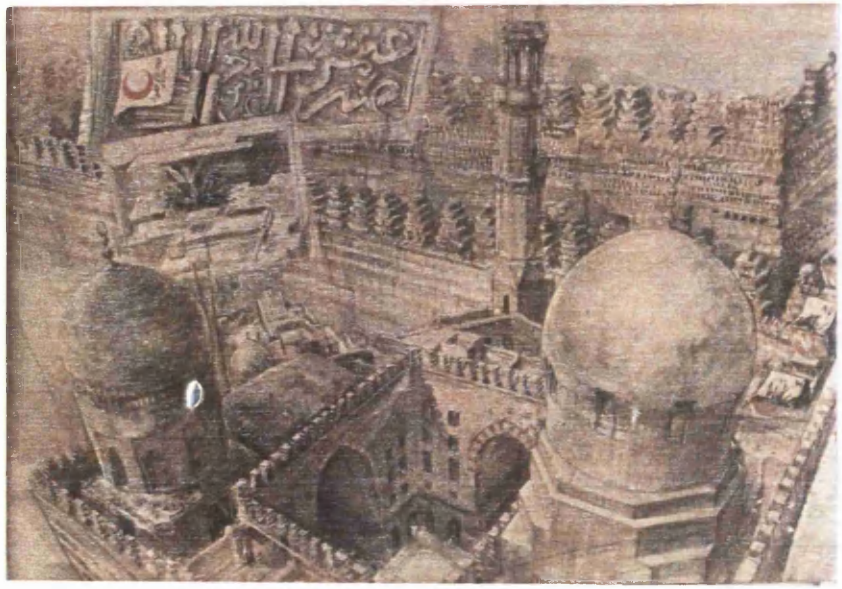
194. Kamal Amin Awad: *Untitled.*



195. Muna Saudi: *The Lover's Tree*.



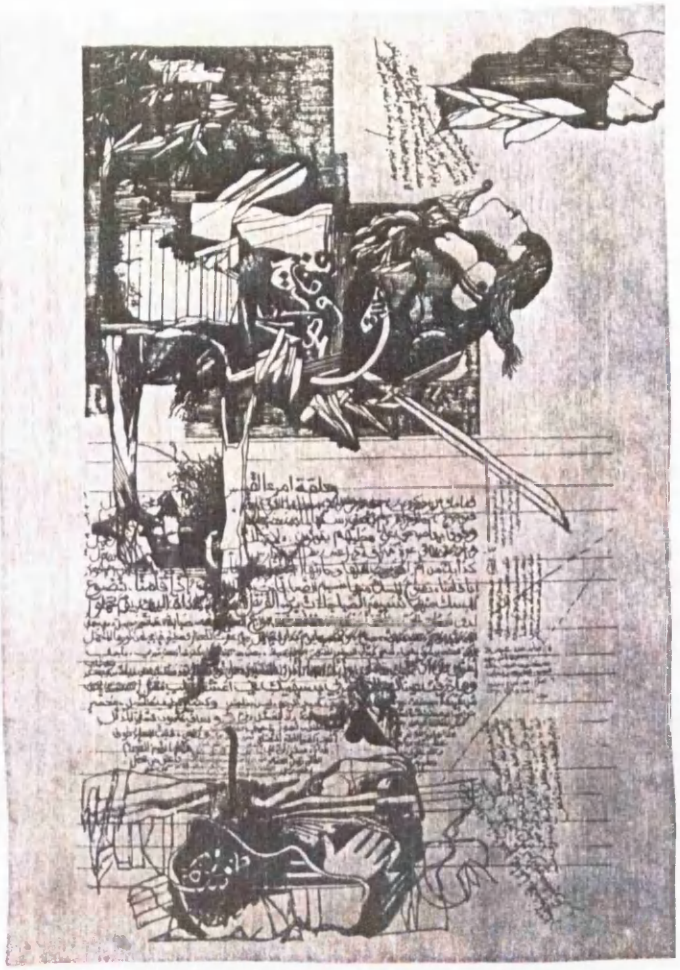
196. Aziz Amoura: *Echoes of Sabra and Shatila*.



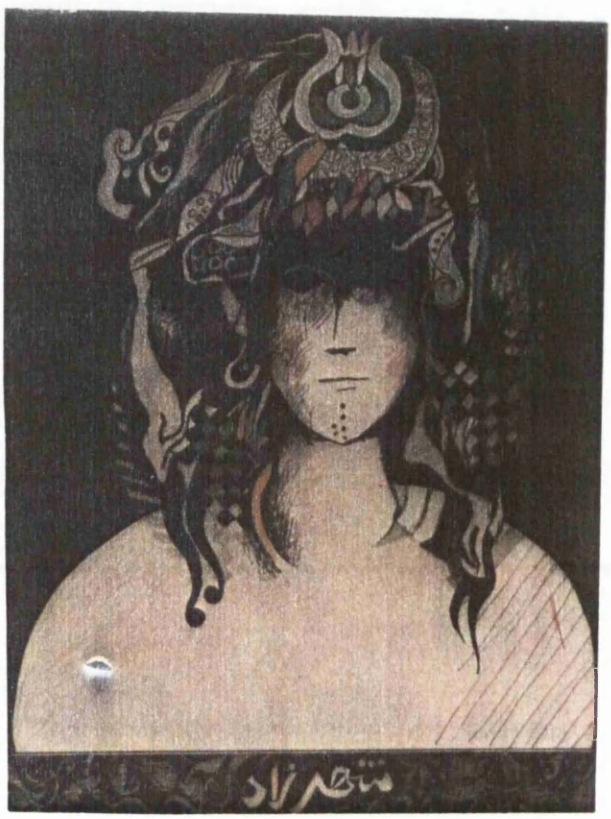
197. Ali Jabri: *Ibn Tulun's Mosque*.

198. Rakan Dabdoub: *A Woman's Thoughts.*

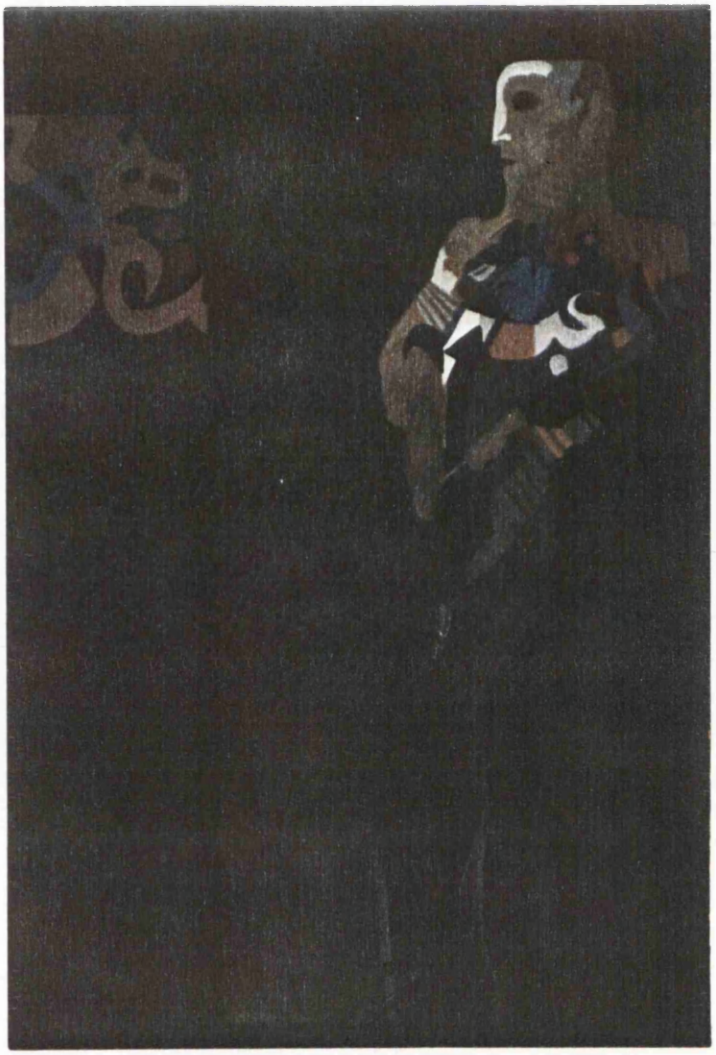
199. Omar Abdallah Khairy: *Nativity.*



200. Dia Azzawi: *Muʿallaqat 'Imri' al-Qays.*

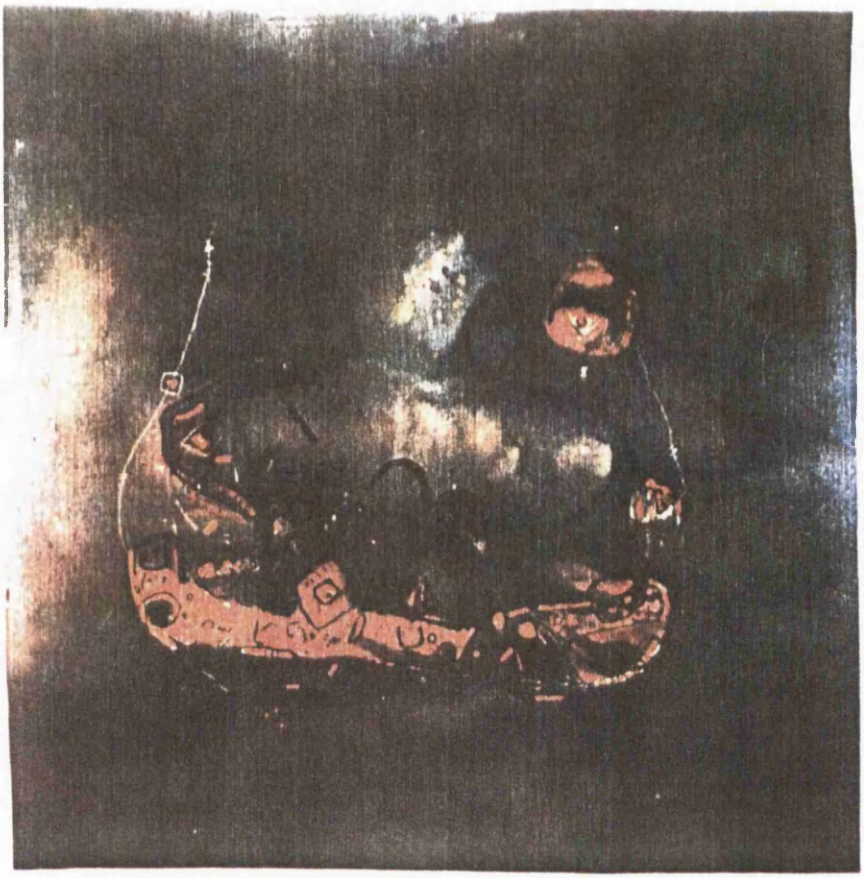


201. Dia Azzawi: *Shahrazad.*



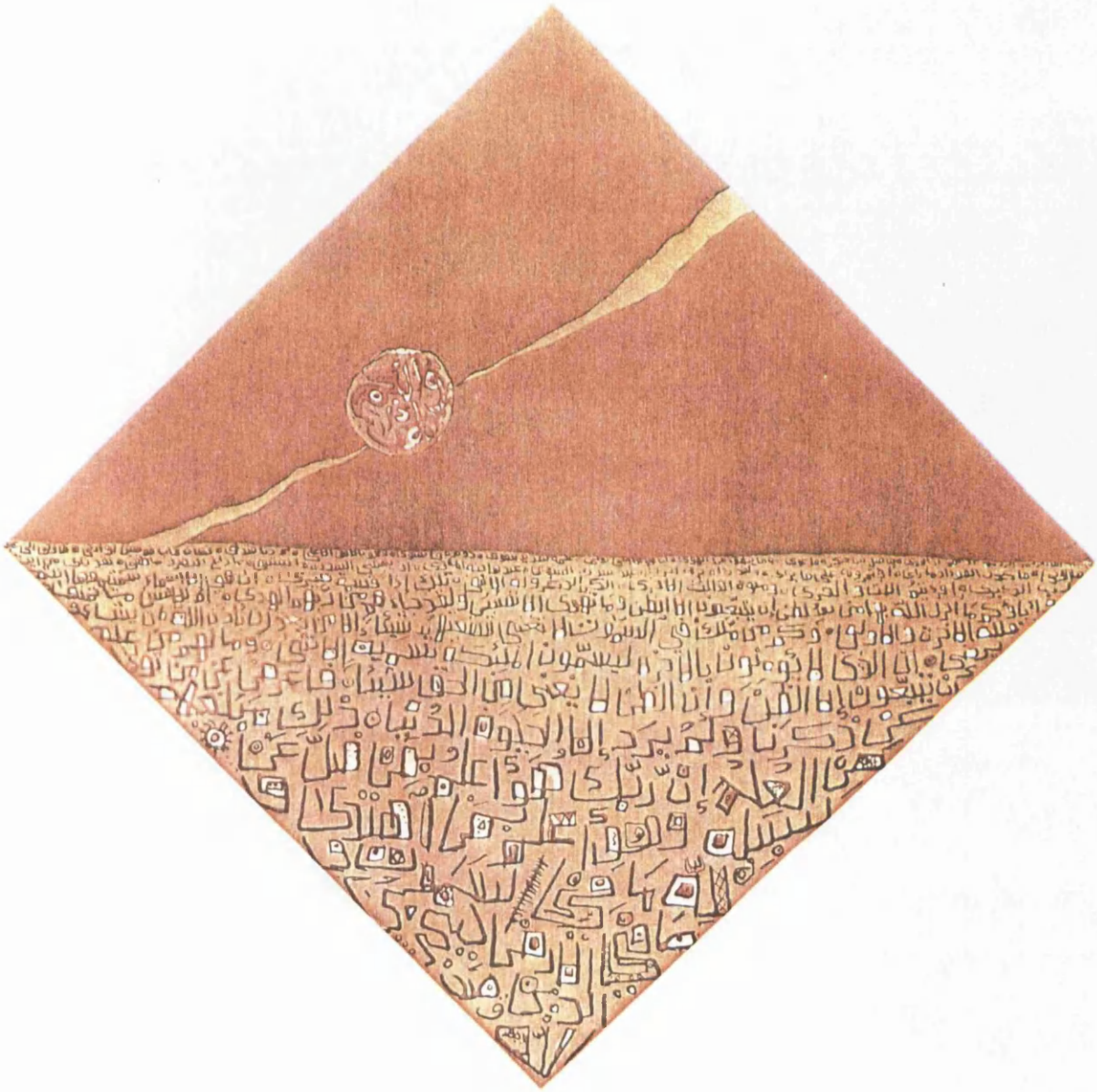
202. Dia Azzawi: *What al-Nīfarī Said to ʿAbdullāh.*

203. Issam El-Said: *Farewell.*

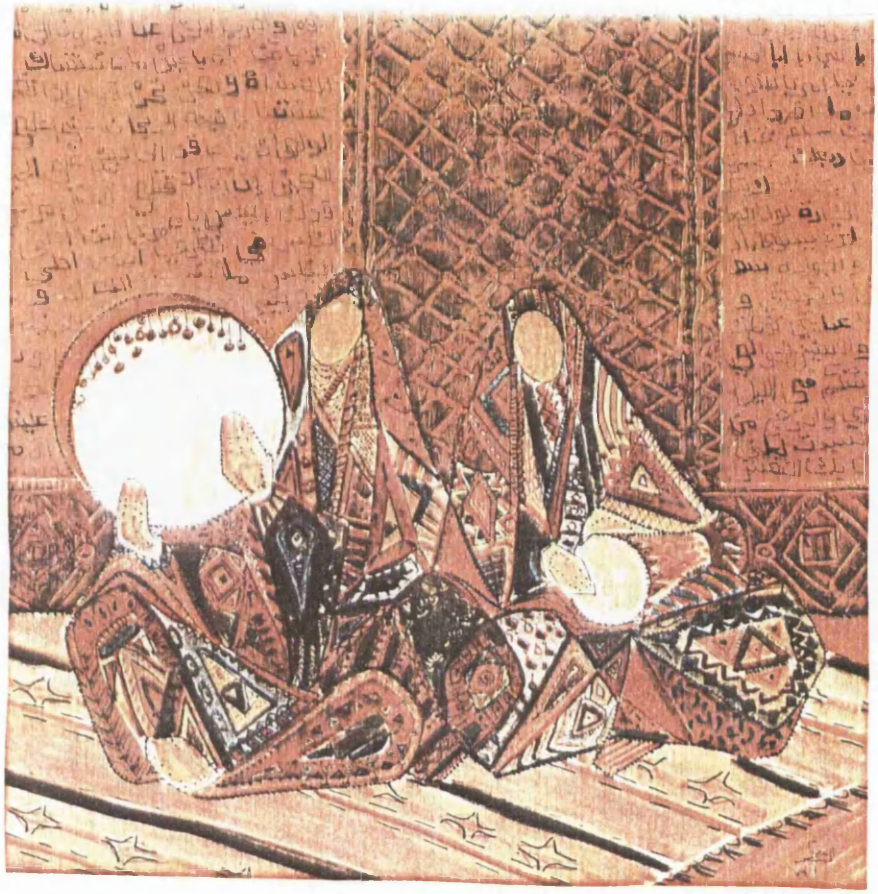


204. Issam El-Said: *Qur'ānic Verse*.

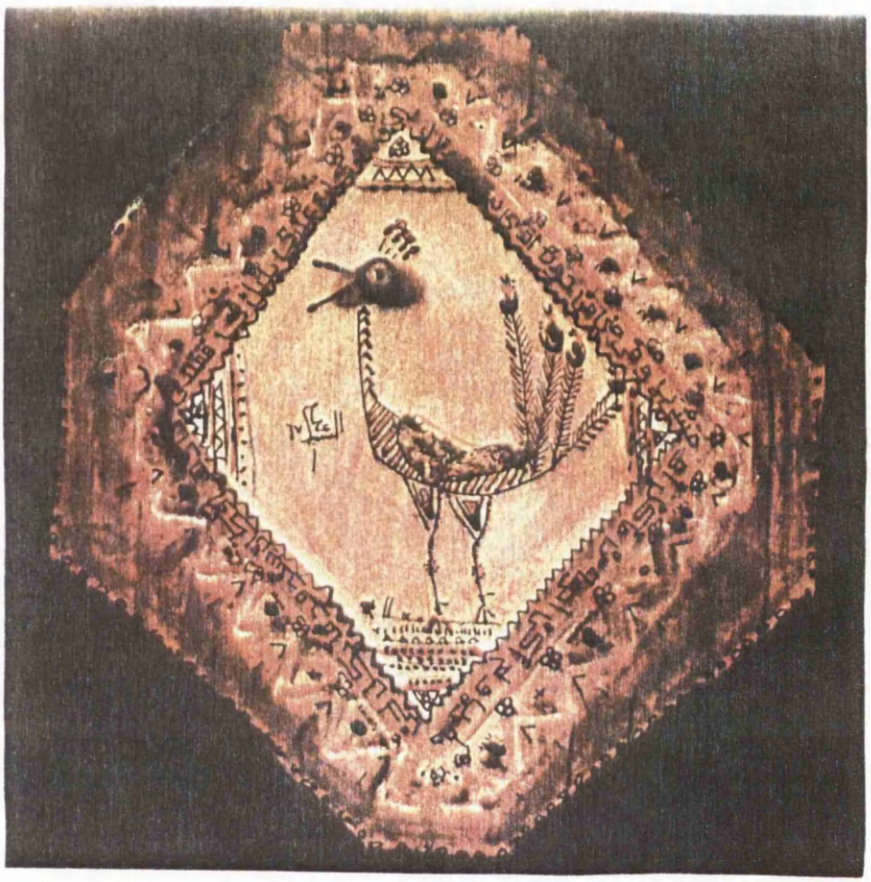
205. Issam El-Said: *Once Upon a Time.*



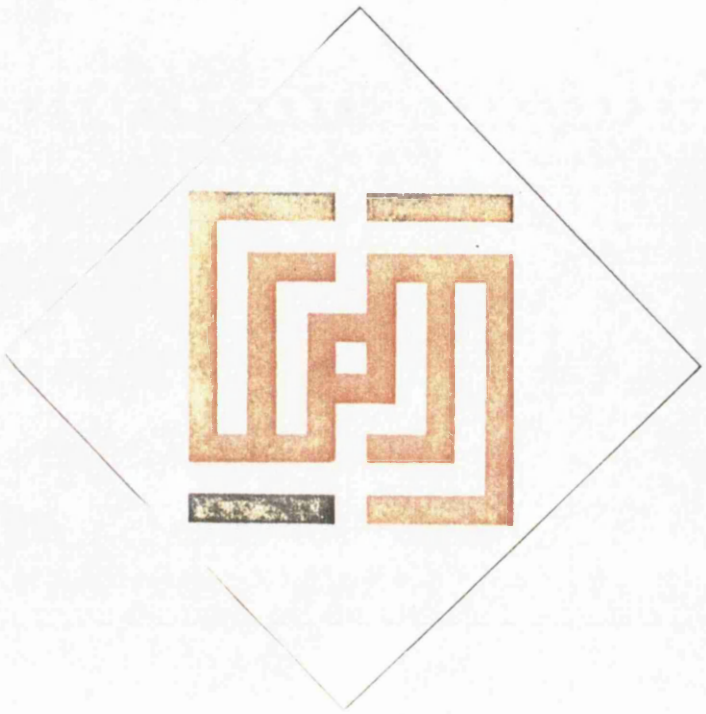
206. Issam El-Said: *Qur'ānic Verse*.



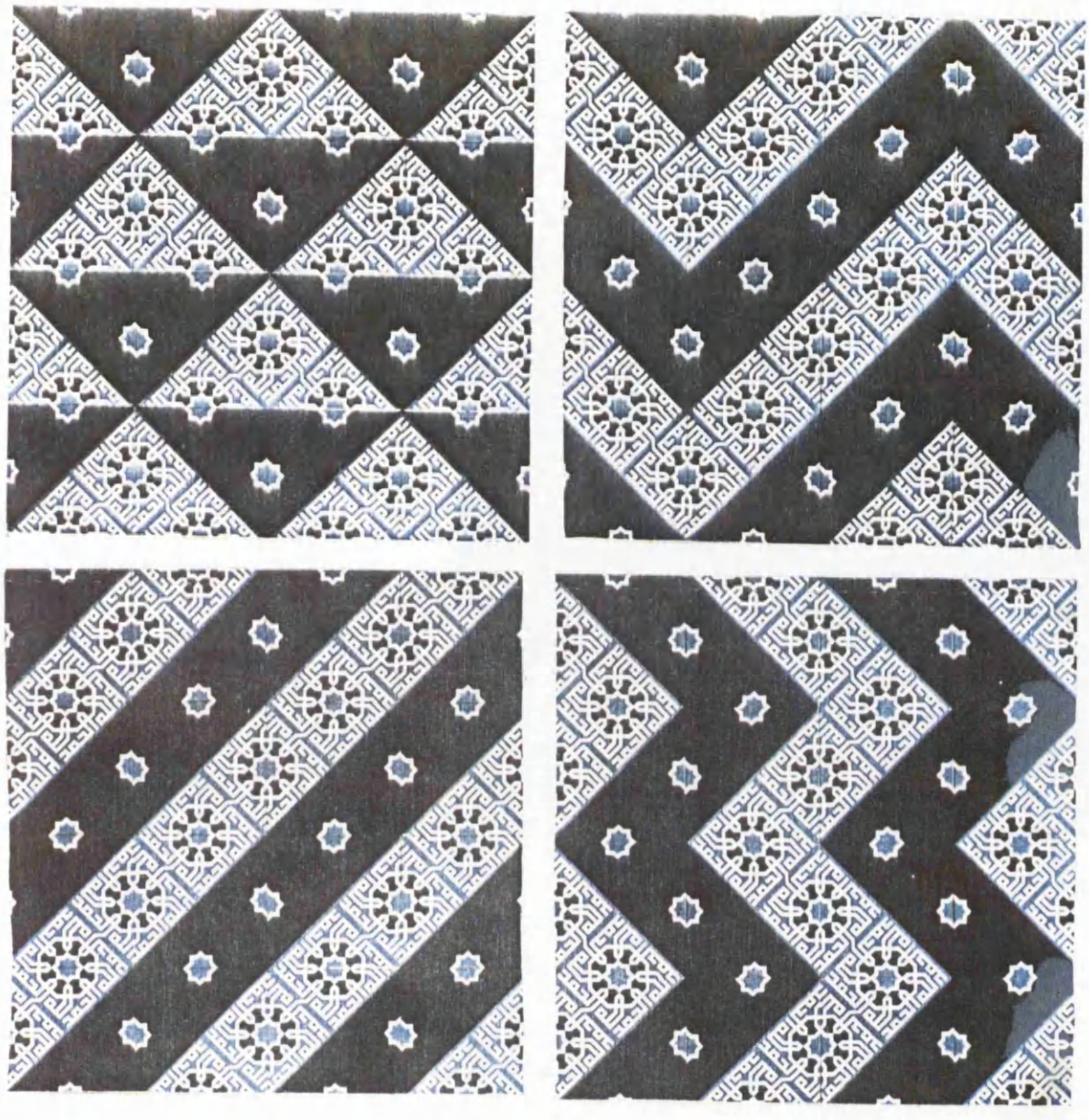
207. Issam El-Said: *The Musicians*.



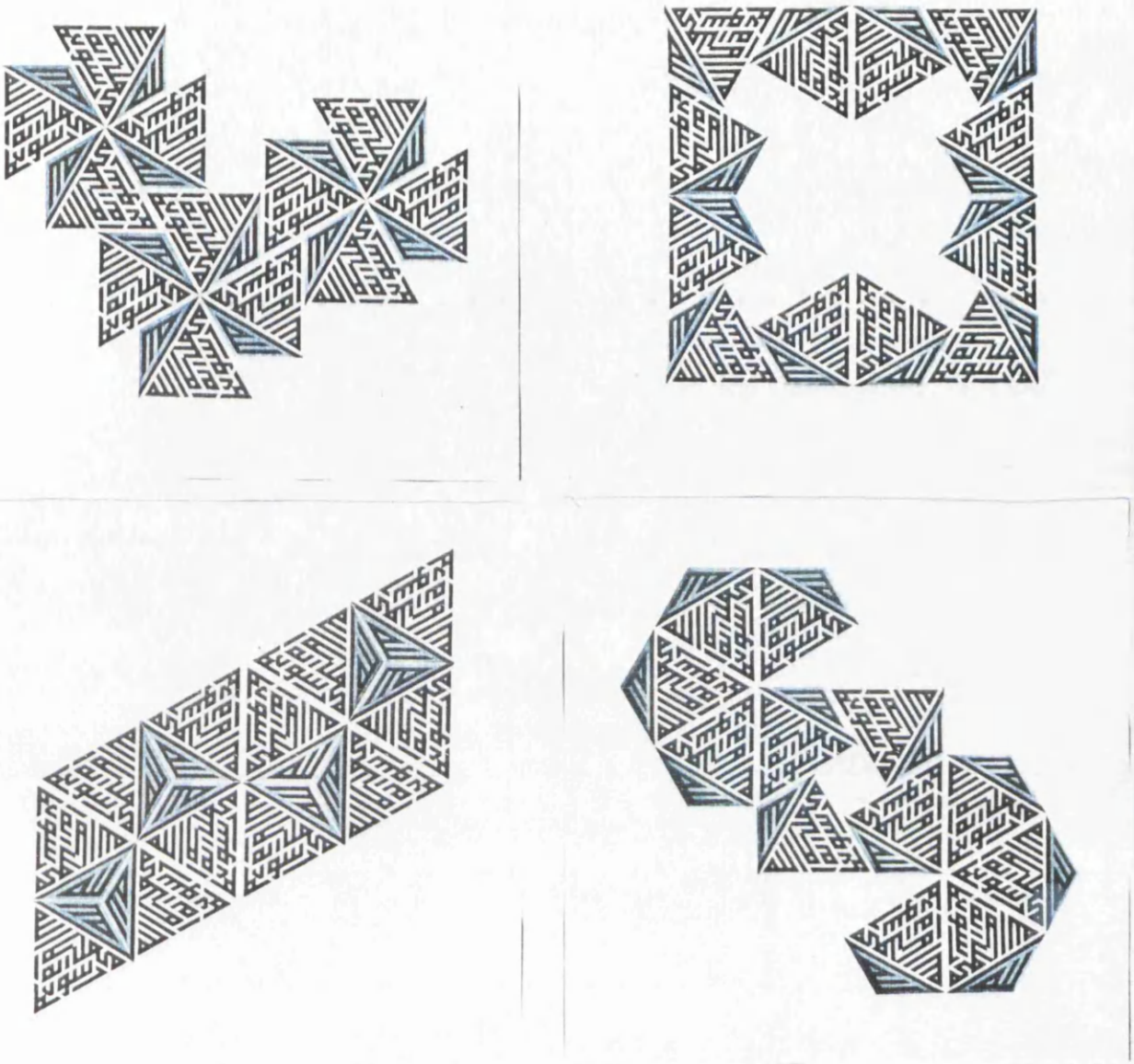
208. Issam El-Said: *Once I had a Bulbul.*



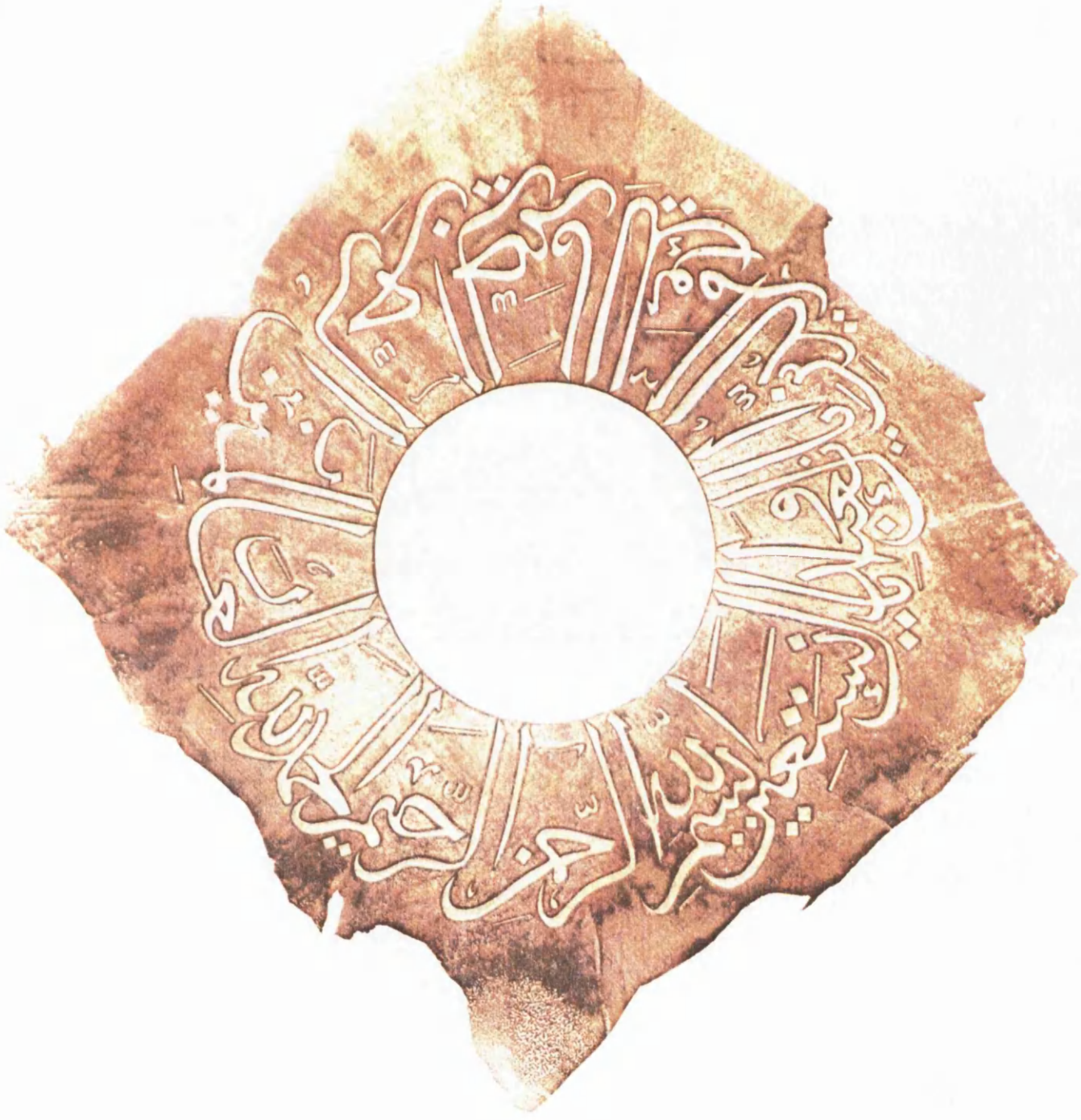
209. Issam El-Said: *Allāh*.



210. Issam El-Said: *Geometric Multiples.*



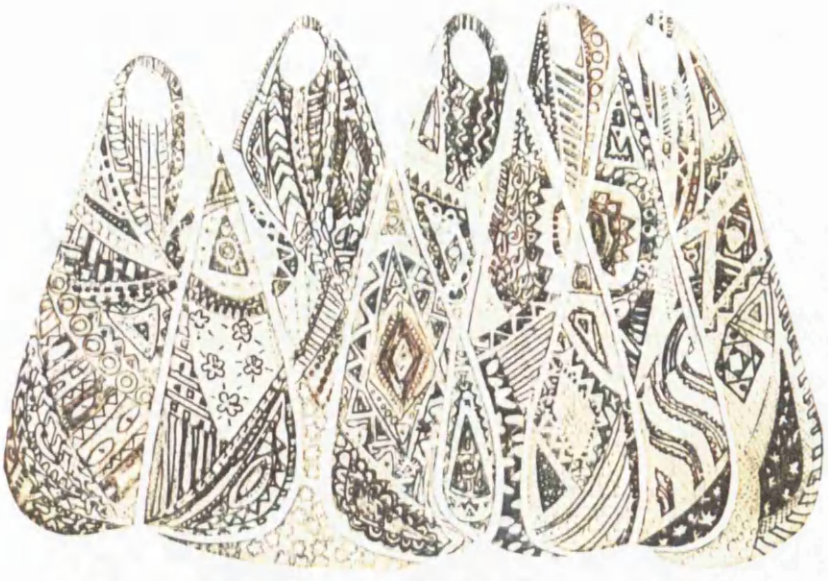
211. Issam El-Said: *Untitled.*



212. Issam El-Said: *From the Qur'ān.*

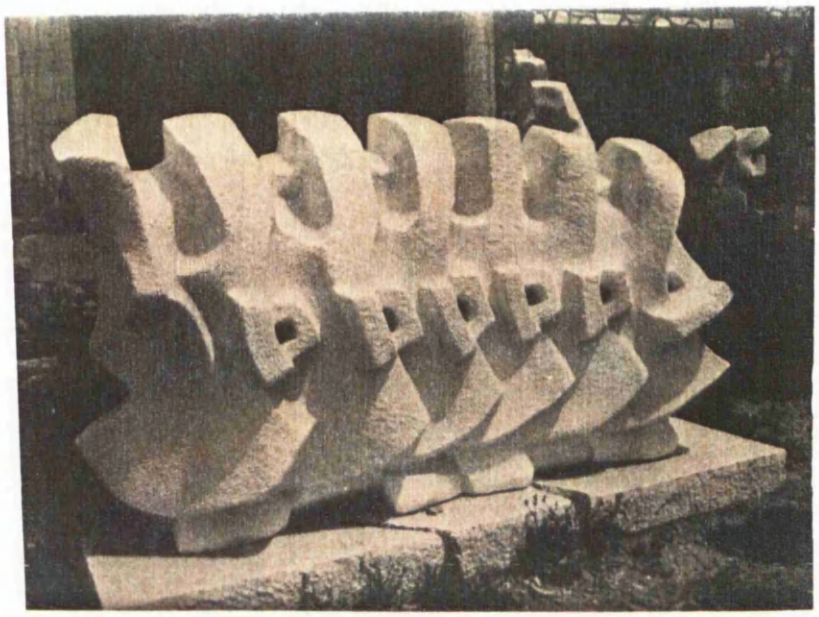
213. Issam El-Said: *Qur'anic Verse*.

214. Issam El-Said: *Bird in a Golden Cage*



215 Issam El-Said: *Five Women.*

216. Salah Taher: *Untitled.*



217. Mouazzaz Rawdah: *Dabke*.

218. Ali Fendi: *Joy of Colour*.

219. Lotfi Larnaout: *Form and Colour*.

220. Muna Saudi: *Untitled*.

Errata.

p.68, line 9: Herbert Read instead of Herbert Reed.

p.127, line 3: "At the age of 36" instead of "At the age of 66".

p.194, line 15: delete (fig.101).

Adendum.

p. 9: "..whatever originated in the Ottoman capital was soon emulated in Beirut, Jerusalem, Damascus, Cairo and Tunis" instead of "..whatever originated in the Ottoman capital was soon emulated in Beirut, Damascus, Cairo and Tunis".

p. 43: par. 2: "The first sultan to show an active interest in Western art was Mahmoud II (1808-1839)" instead of: "The first sultan to show interest in Western art was Mahmud II (1808-1839)".

p.163: par. 1: "..only at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries did Iranians (including students) start travelling to Europe in considerable numbers" instead of "..only at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries did Iranians (including students) start travelling to Europe".

Bibliography: Hourani, A., A History of the Arab People, London (1991).